

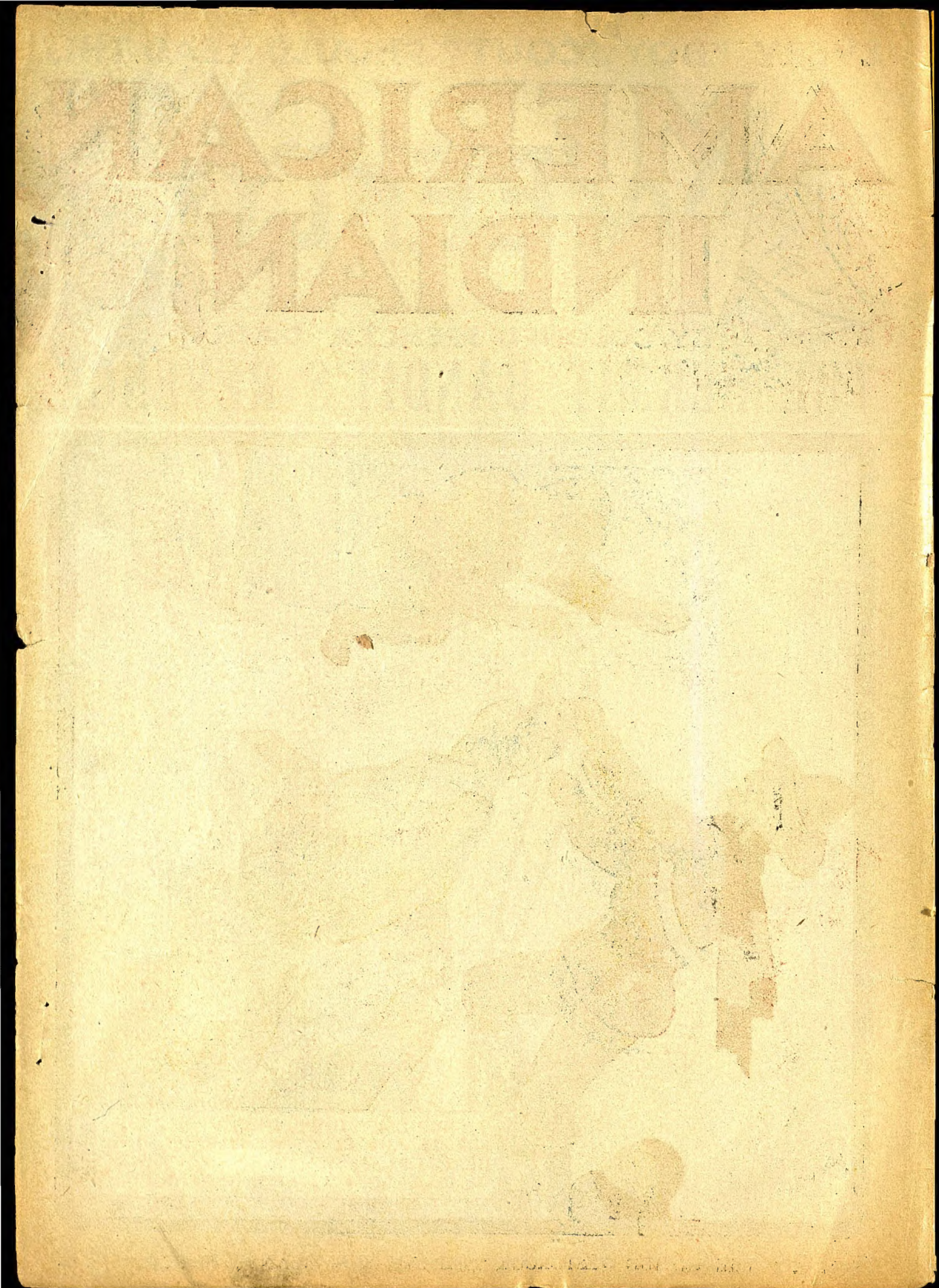
EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

THE HERMIT BANDIT'S REVENGE





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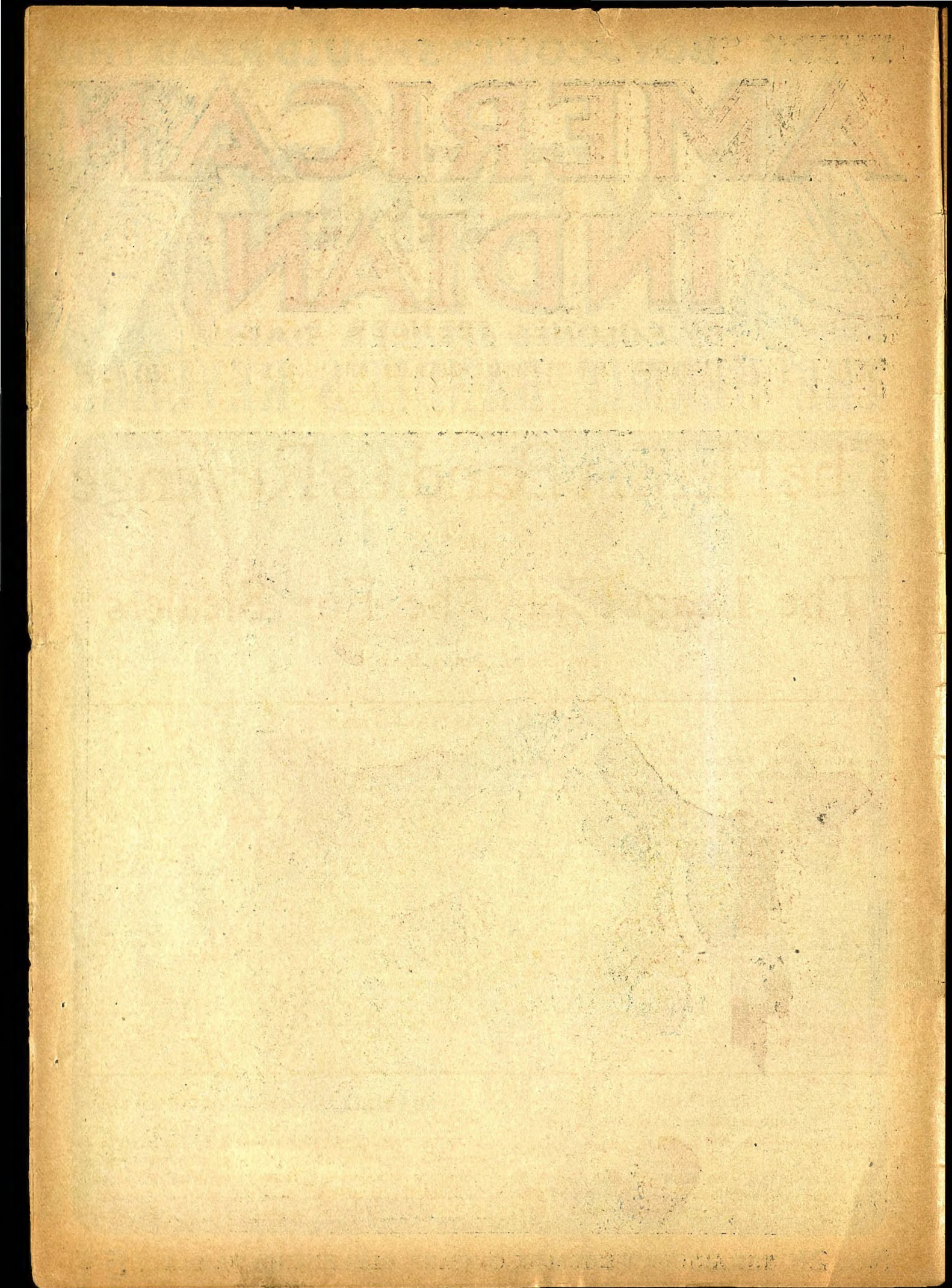
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THE HERMIT BANDIT'S REVENGE



"MY REVENGE IS COMPLETE! DIE, YOU FUR-STEALING COYOTES!" SHRIEKED THE HERMIT DWARF LEADER, AS HE CUT THE ROPE LADDER WITH HIS KEEN KNIFE.



AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

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The Hermit Bandit's Revenge or The League of The Fur Stealers

By Colonel Spencer Dair.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

MAXWELL HYDE—In the early days of Missouri troubles the gun-man of the West and South-West played a prominent part. His days were numbered, however, when he got into the service of the United States government as a Marshal, or entered private employment as the agent of wealthy men who needed brave gun-ready men to stop the depredations of outlaws which infested the country. To this class belonged Maxwell Hyde. A man of bravery, a gun-fighter, an outlaw himself, he was hired by the Western and South Western Bankers Guild to blot out two bandits, who of his own class were terrorizing the South-West and were looting many small banks. How the bold fighting men chased the two lone outlaws who had held up the Milton and North Milton banks, robbed them of some fifty thousand dollars and murdered the cashier of the institution at Milton, Missouri, is a story of desperate chances well taken.

FRED FELTON—The young brother of the murdered cashier of the Milton bank. He starts with Maxwell Hyde in the quest for two daring outlaws of international reputation who had accomplished the terrible deed. He was brave and young, and ably played his part in the exciting search, with numerous poses for the outlaws which ended fruitlessly—but there is always a to-morrow!

DWARF HANK—A member of the Fur-Stealers League and the Missouri agent for this well-known criminal association. He aided in the attempts of the two outlaws to escape, and met a merited doom in his battle with the authorities led by Maxwell Hyde. But he was only a small thief and fence and was not of bank-looting caliber.

BIG ED GRAY—A member of one of the posses hunting down the bank-looters. He was selected by Maxwell Hyde as one of a body of men to aid him in a mid-air battle for the arrest of the outlaws. Big Ed was brave but was "put out" early in the sanguinary onslaught up in the clouds in the aerial home of Dwarf Hank.

TIM BENNETT—A farmer's lad with the brains of an older man. He showed Maxwell Hyde how to make one last bold dash for the outlaws and then went back to his crops perfectly contented.

CASHIER FELTON—The murdered official of the Milton bank, who, before he was shot as he sat bound in his chair, wrote with one finger which he used as a pen to write in the dust on his desk-top the name of the bandit who had looted the bank of its cash and afterward murdered him.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASKED MYSTERY.

"Watch me put a bullet in him! Steady now, old horse!"

The speaker was a man about five feet ten inches in height, and weighed about one hundred and sixty-five pounds. His hair and eyes were brown and he sat

his fine black horse as if he were a part of the splendid animal.

As he sneered the words that came just before he fired his repeating rifle, which was even now resting lightly at his shoulder, it could be seen in the half-light of the fitful stars that the speaker had lost a finger of his left hand no doubt from a bullet wound.

"If you are going to shoot do it quick! The town's awake," cried a voice at the left of the first speaker, from a slighter man, with light hair and clear blue eyes, and a ragged, reddish moustache.

Crash! The shot from the rifle echoed in the early night air, but without stopping to see the result, the two men sped down the straight line of hilly country road at fine speed on their great, fast horses.

"Ride hard!" cried the slighter of the two men, "there goes those poppers at us!"

The words were hardly out of the speaker's mouth when from behind them the reek of the night seemed to spit flame, followed by the crashing reverberation of rifles and revolvers, while yells, hoots, a medley of screams and oaths were wafted to the hurrying men, who lay low on their horses and sped out into the open country.

"Don't lose the swag!" murmured the first rider. "Ride for all there's in the beasts!"

As he spoke he pulled the slight mask from his face, and his companion followed suit.

The action showed two faces that were rigid with purpose, and there was something about the air of each man that spoke as plainly as if the words "bad-men" had been uttered by a shouting voice.

The early "seventies" threw to the surface many such men, as the cheapness of revolvers and rifles, added to the desperado-like character of some men, seemed fallow land for burglaries, bank-robberies, hold-ups, and general thuggery on the part of many rash untrained men.

The scene from which these two men were escaping was the straggling Missouri town of Milton; and they had just looted the largest and in fact the only substantial bank in the place, and with their plunder in a great sack slung across the horse of the second of the fleeing riders, were trying to escape a posse of indignant citizens aroused by the sounds of firing.

The two masked men of mystery had dashed into the town just about midnight. They had come upon horses whose shoes had been pulled off so that no ring of steel would be heard to warn any person that night of the deeds of blood that would soon ensue.

The men had hurried to the home of Cashier Felton, in a substantial house only a few hundred feet from the bank building.

One of the men knocked softly on the door of the fated cashier's home.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"H-u-s-h!" cried one of the robbers, as he whispered the name of the president of the bank. "It is I! Get up and hurry down! There's trouble about the bank!"

Thinking that the whisper was uttered by his chief officer in the bank, Cashier Felton, half asleep, jumped up and partly dressed hurried down and opened the door.

A pair of brawny hands clutched his throat as he did so; another pair of hands pressed a revolver to his head.

"Speak a word and I'll blow your brains out!" hissed a deadly calm voice.

Felton knew that he was trapped. He was in the hands of the two outlaw bank robbers, and he quickly made up his mind to discover who the men were, and thus, while he felt that he could not stay the looting of the bank, that he might at least discover the iden-

titles of the two robbers, and later bring the men to justice.

While he peered into the faces of the men, their masks effectually concealed them, and he saw that unless there was some accident that he could not tell who his captors were; the men were, so far as he was concerned, liable to continue to be men of mystery.

In a few moments the robbers had despoiled the unfortunate cashier of the combination of the safe of the bank, and, with expertness of men long in the business of bank-looting, they had rushed into the safe, tied the cashier, gagged and bound him in a chair and then had swiftly possessed themselves of a large amount of gold, silver, and bank notes in the safe, literally shoveled it in the sack that one of the outlaws carried tied about his waist, and then had stolen out of the bank with their weapons ready and had softly tip-toed to their horses tied at a rickety fence near by.

The two men looked keenly about into the light that comes from stars in a Missouri night. They could hear the faint hum of the night insects about them; and the faint twitter of birds among the trees.

"Hush! what's that?" murmured one of the men. His ears had detected the faint snapping of a twig.

"Some one's there," he remarked in a matter-of-fact tone, and, as he half turned, he twitched a revolver from his belt, which seemed to be a small arsenal of deadly weapons, and with a crash and a roar opened fire in the direction of the sound of the breaking twig.

Had the shots that first sounded from the bank-robber's pistol been a signal, there could not have come a quicker return.

From the semi-darkness came a blaze of light. The lights were quickly followed by a rapid set of explosions as the pistol sent forth its hail, and it would seem that with men who were trained in the use of the revolver that some one ought to have fallen immediately. It was not to be so, however, for the semi-darkness made the bandit's aim unsteady. He had only the fire of the enemy at which to aim, and whoever was firing the shots had plenty of experience in this mode of gun-play for he fired, dashed to the ground with the shot, pulled again, weaved to the right or the left, and the outlaw, whose curses could be heard as he sensed the situation could only fire aimlessly at the flash of an enemy who with the flash took up a new position.

The unknown foe, also, was handicapped by the two outlaws, who with the shot of the first one had dodged behind a low fence and were pursuing quite the same line of tactics as the other gun-fighter—but the shots added one element that the outlaws saw made their position awkward.

The town was aroused!

"The bank's being robbed!" howled a running man, as he shot his rifle in the air to awaken others. He had heard the sound of the shooting and had rushed from his house to the bank, firing his weapon as he did so. Then lights began to flash in the town. Men, half dressed, but deadly eager in their intent to aid in the repulse of the robbers, ran hurriedly hither and thither. They were joined by other half-clad men, and soon a formidable posse was in action. It had no leader in its first inception, and this was what the outlaws had counted on. They had planned their raid in all calmness, and, although there were only two in the

party, they acted so unitedly that there was no opportunity for a false movement to jeopardize their plans.

"Get to the horses," murmured one of the robbers at length. "That—— firing at us has got the town up! It's a straight ride for safety for ours!"

"Good! Come on! There's our horses not twenty feet away!"

Like huge black serpents the men stole to their waiting steeds and were mounted in a trice. It was then that they turned and before rushing out of the town the stronger and taller of the two bandits delivered a single shot into the darkness of the bank.

Poor Felton, the brave cashier, curled over dead, as the shot rang out.

His brave attempt to save the looted bank by identifying the robbers was ended in his cold-blooded murder. But he was not to be, after all, in the position of a man who had died for the right without accomplishment, for when the posse members dashed into the bank and turned up the lights, they found that the dead cashier, whose bullet wound in the center of his forehead told how unerring had been the aim of the outlaw, had with infinite pains, bound as he was, traced a name in the dust that lay on the arm of the big chair that had been used by the outlaws as a place in which to secure him.

"Whose name is that?" cried one of the posse.

"Can't make it out," murmured a second man.

"Let me see!" shouted a strongly built man, broad-shouldered, about five feet seven inches in height, and whose clear blue eyes, rather sandy hair, florid complexion, and rather thin lips made up a striking personality. There was something about the inquirer that smacked of purpose, and, although he was a stranger in the tiny town, there was an air of command about him. In fact this was so marked that the members of the posse, who had discovered the name traced by the dead finger of the cashier, pushed aside all formality and made way for a man whom they had never seen before.

The stranger looked at the writing in the dust.

"Ah!" he murmured to himself. "Yes, I see! I thought it was he—baffled again, but never mind! My time will come next!"

As he murmured these words the sound of the returning posse, who had been in vain chase of the fleeing outlaws, returned to the bank and crowded into it making a motley crowd of fierce faces, but unfortunately merely as they stood being an undisciplined force.

"Well, they got away," sulked one of the outlaw pursuers.

"I thought as much," dryly answered the strange man, still reading the name traced by the dead; over and over.

"Would you mind telling us your name?" asked the leader of the mob.

"Not at all—it's Maxwell Hyde," replied the stranger in an indifferent tone.

The name went buzzing through the room.

"It's Maxwell Hyde, the Texan gun-man! He's hired by the Western and South-Western Bankers Guild to chase down all such bandits as have looted this bank," murmured the Mayor of the town.

"If he chases down the fellow whose name is written there," whispered a second man, "I'd like to see the shooting when they meet!"

Maxwell Hyde looked around the ring of faces.

"Who can loan me a good horse?" he shouted.

In ten minutes a roan charger, whose look showed bottom and speed, was ready for the bandit-chaser. He started to swing himself into the saddle when he saw a young man, of about twenty years of age, armed to the teeth, seated on a rangy bay horse, awaiting him.

Maxwell gave the stranger a searching glance. He swung into the saddle and loped out of town.

Over his shoulder he shouted to the other mounted man a few words, and then together they dashed off in pursuit of the outlaws.

"You're the dead cashier's brother," remarked Hyde as the two men loped along, "and you are after vengeance!"

"I am," replied the stranger. "My name is Fred Felton. I don't know how I can avenge my brother's cowardly murder better than by going along with such a famous gun-fighter as Maxwell Hyde."

"There's none of us so good that there ain't some other man better," murmured Maxwell Hyde as he dug his spurs into his horse's side, and flew over the road. "But I've been chasing the outlaw that turned this trick for some time—and it looks as if this time I'd land him! Spur hard!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FLIGHT OF THE OUTLAWS.

For the first few miles of the race for safety the two outlaws went at the best speed of their horses, but when the going became harder they slackened their speed and soon had the horses going at a slinging trot.

"That will do, Jesse," laughed the slight man.

"Rest a little, eh, Frank?" the taller man laughed and then the two famous outlaws, the James Brothers, Jesse and Frank, hurried onward, every sense intent upon escape.

The way of blood that these famous men had marked for themselves was rapidly making escape harder and harder after each deed of reckless daring had come to light.

The two men were now famous all over the Missouri-Texas country, and were rapidly assuming National notoriety. They worked in a country then without much pretence to law and order. They had a wildness of scope in their deeds of crime. They were brave, reckless, daring and anxious to win, their only code being to stick to each other, at all risks, and fight off the forces of the law.

They had looted so many of the banks of the territory in which they lived, that they had forced an organized operation against them, hence the forming of the Bankers Guild and the hiring of Maxwell Hyde, a celebrated gun-fighter with something of the outlaw in himself, to try and bring the two James boys, Jesse and Frank, to the justice they so richly merited.

"I suppose," remarked Jesse James, to Frank, "that Maxwell Hyde is on our trail again."

"You bet he is," replied Frank. "Do you know, Jesse, that I think he was the man firing at us out of the darkness."

"I'm with you in that! I think so myself. I heard he was after us when we left home—and do you know, Jesse, this game's getting hard for us? That fellow,

Maxwell Hyde, is a good man. We've got to get him——"

"In course of time if we don't get him," replied Jesse. "He'll get us, eh?"

"You're on!"

"Well, he won't get us—this trip!"

"Will we get him?"

"I don't know. I don't want to try any conclusions this trip. I just want to get out of the game quick. All I'm looking for is to call it a draw and get off with the pelf."

"How much do you suppose we got this time?"

"Don't think we got more than about fifty thousand dollars, did we?"

"No. That bank cleaned up fairish—but we will make that fifty thousand go quick, won't we?"

"There's a lot of the boys to pay up," replied Jesse. "W-el-l, never mind. We will see what we do see."

The two outlaws rode on, a little faster now, because it looked lighter in the East showing that the dawn was coming. The flat, rather uninteresting country gave little shelter for any one, but the Missouri River about five miles further toward the left was heavily wooded, and Frank James suspected that Jesse was going to push that way for shelter.

"Going to the river?" Frank asked.

"Yes."

"What's the plan?"

"There's a fellow there named Dwarf Hank. He is a hermit-like thing, misshapen, and gnarled as a twisted oak. He's about as unlikely a cuss to go to as you ever saw—he lives the life of a bandit. I guess he's a sort of fence for a lot of chaps that steal furs from boats coming down the Missouri, or for that matter anything else they can steal."

"Gang of petty-larceny thieves, eh?" cried Frank, with the bold outlaw's contempt for deeds that were secret and had little call for personal bravery in them.

"That's right!"

"Do you know this fellow—Dwarf Hank?"

"Sure! He has helped me out before when Cole Younger and I were down this way a year ago. I staked the ugly little brute pretty well, and if we can get to him we need not fear that we are going to be caught—he will hide us out until we get a chance to steal back to Independence."

"Good work! You always plan things so that we get off, eh?"

"Yes, Frank. So far I've planned things. But I don't like this game. They are liable to pen us in any minute. This chap Maxwell Hyde is no slouch. I'd make monkeys of the Pinkerton detectives or any other detective that you ever heard of, but this fellow Maxwell is one of our kind—he knows our game as well as we do. I remember when he was down in Texas three years ago. Then they used to fear him as being about in my class up this way—and he had a pretty bad gang behind him. He can shoot and ain't afraid to pull his gun and use it—I don't like him a little bit trailing after us."

"How long, as near as you get at it, has he been trailing us?"

"He's been after us six or seven weeks at least. Some of our friends in Clay County have told us a lot about him, and his being after us. But I didn't take him so serious as I might have done you know. He has since then been pretty busy, and I guess we will

have to shoot him up soon or he will get to us—well, spur up a bit. I want to get to Dwarf Hank's as soon as we can. It's better to get hid quick."

"How long will we have to lay out?"

"Not more than a week—maybe only a few days."

"Do you suppose Maxwell Hyde is on our trail?"

"Sure! If he was the man that shot at us, you bet he ain't more than a few miles behind us. He is the kind of chap that don't let up when he has a scent until he is baffled."

"You have baffled him a bit, eh?"

"Been lucky, that's all. Don't you think, however, that he isn't the kind of a man that is easily baffled. He is a bull-dog on sticking to a trail. It was easy to shake off the other fellows in that bunch—but not so easy, don't you see Frank, to get rid of him. Hustle forward a bit."

The two outlaws, utterly undismayed that one of them had just killed an unsuspecting and innocent man a few hours before, rushed onward as if nothing had happened to jar them from their usual train of thought.

Men who had robbed, murdered, been notoriously infamous all over the country since boyhood, as these men of outlawry and blood, were not of a habit of mind to mourn over the death of a man who stood in the way of their loot.

So the James boys rushed onward, light-hearted, yet in their hearts knowing that behind them came Maxwell Hyde, almost as desperate a man as either of them.

How would the rush of pursuer and pursued end?

Would the James boys once more escape the fate they richly merited at the hands of the officers of the law?

These two questions were seething in the brains of either of the outlaws, and a few miles now alone separated them.

Jesse James, the son of a clergyman, and his brother Frank had made Clay County, Missouri, world renowned. Their mother, who in the early fifties, was practically deserted by her husband, who started for California, but was never heard of again, later married Doctor Samuels, and, at the time of the raid on the Milton, Missouri, bank, was living at the Missouri home of the family.

The family was a terror to many in that part of the world, but seemed to have many friends in certain parts of the country, and the plan to reach the sheltering haven of the dwarf, known as Dwarf Hank, appeared to indicate the undercurrent in favor of the two James boys.

The two riders finally reached the sheltering haven of a shaded nook in a bend of the river.

Jesse, who as always lead the foraging parties, whether of only he and his brother or others of the other outlaws affiliated with him, halted beneath a large tree, with roots gnarled and tortuous at its base. Jesse, after some fumbling about the roots of the tree, found a horn with which he gave one long low, subdued note.

"What's that?" asked Frank suspiciously.

"Wait and you will see," replied Jesse.

Both men listened and as no sound came Jesse sounded a second note a bit louder, and immediately after came the sound of a similar note from further down the river.

"There he is!" cried Jesse as he hid the horn.

In a few moments a boat was seen to come shooting out along the river but not far from shore. In the boat was a strange little figure. It wore a peaked hat of furs, although the day was hot, for it was now past eight o'clock in the morning. Its long hair made it have an unearthly cast to its countenance.

As soon as the tiny figure was opposite Jesse he stepped out into the open and raised his hand.

The dwarf saw the action and soon shot the boat to a point near Jesse, and with wonderful dexterity, considering the enormous hump on its back, and its shrunk limbs, jumped out of the craft and eagerly hurried to Jesse's side.

"Hello, Jesse!" the dwarf muttered in a high, fine little voice.

"Hello, Hank!" replied Jesse. "How's things?"

"Did you blow the horn?" asked the dwarf.

"Sure! I needed you."

"What's up?"

"Been pulling over a trick—man on my heels."

"Oh! Who's after you?"

"Maxwell Hyde."

"That's bad—but it might be worse."

"Yes. He might have caught me."

"But he hasn't—what do you want me to do?"

"I want to hide out from that fellow a night or two."

"Of course you can—better get on your horses. Go down the river half a mile and you will see a long bar. You can easily ford the river there. There's a spot about a hundred feet wide that you'll have to swim, but it is easy forded the rest of the way. You two boys don't mind a little wetting?"

"I should say not—but how about you?" remarked Jesse.

"I'll row across, hide the boat on the opposite shore and lead you to my hang out. You know I change my place of living every few days. Ho! Ho! Ho!"

"Getting hot for you here, eh?"

"You bet! The revenue officers, and Lord only knows what officers else, are chasing me all the time. I just have to mosey here and hustle there, but some how or other I don't seem to have much trouble 'cept the trouble of moving so often—what you boys been doin'?"

"Bank bustin," replied Jesse. "Frank and I pushed over an easy one in the bank at Milton—got away but croaked the cashier, and got chased by a posse. We shook off the posse easily, but just before we hit the road, party opened fire on us from thicket, or fence, in the darkness I couldn't tell which. I am pretty sure that the fellow firing at us was Maxwell Hyde."

"I see. Well if it was Hyde, you bet he's chasing you! If it wasn't you are safe and I don't suppose that it will harm you to lay off here for a day or two, anyway—of course I get a bit of this for holding you out?"

"How's five hundred in gold?"

"That's all right. Wouldn't take no bank notes from that place—they smell of blood, but gold don't smell of anything, you know, and there's no government tracer in the world that can hand us anything for spending clean gold; no one can tell where gold comes from!"

The dwarf winked at Frank James as he spoke and Frank burst into a roar of laughter.

"Never mind laughing. Let's get on," checked Jesse sharply and he and his brother jumped on their

horses and soon rode to the bar indicated by Dwarf Hank. Jesse led the way and when he had shaded his eyes from the sun and had seen that the dwarf was half way over the river in his boat by this time, he boldly spurred his horse forward into the muddy waters of the Missouri. The horse at first snorted, but Jesse guided him along a rocky reef, broad and shallow and which at no part seemed to show the animal danger, although now and then he was up to his belly in water.

The going became harder after a bit, and finally with a snort and one heavy plunge the two horses were over-head in the water and began swimming lustily for the further shore. Jesse threw himself off the animal, dressed as he was, and began swimming with one hand tightly clutching the animal's tail, giving it its own will. Frank followed the same plan, and after a brief struggle the animals found footing again, both men jumped on the back of the faithful steeds and they churned away through the shallow water to where they saw the dwarf standing and amiably grinning at them.

"I see, Jesse," the dwarf remarked, "you haven't lost your skill at the game of swimming a horse."

"It's been a long time since I've tried it," Jesse replied. "I ain't stuck on the job. But it had to be done."

The party then hurried through a tangle of soft oozy bottom-land, where the feet of their horses made no mark. They soon came on firmer ground, and then Dwarf Hank whistled shrilly and a man stole out to meet him from behind a tree. The man was told to take the horses of the two outlaws and to rub them down well. He disappeared with the animals and the dwarf led the two brothers to a hilly hummock, and after he had pulled aside what appeared to be a piece of rock but was really a cleverly painted bit of timber, showed the entrance to a tunnel into which he plunged followed by the wet and hungry outlaws.

"Here we are," Dwarf Hank said genially as he led the way into a roomy place where there was light and air, in profusion. "You fellows better change your clothes, while I get a bite to eat. You need not fear anything from Maxwell Hyde. He will be seen if he tracks you here by one of my boys and we will be tipped off—hurry up, Jesse, you look pretty wet!"

CHAPTER III.

DWARF HANK'S LAIR.

When Jesse and Frank James had issued from their invigorating rub and had clad themselves in clothes that Dwarf Hank had provided them, they heard the hissing of cooking viands on an oil-stove in one part of the space they were in.

Jesse looked around him. The place, he saw, was a splendid cavern, which was at least two hundred feet long, a hundred wide and ran up several hundred feet. The mellow light came from interstices in the roof through which the sunlight was filtering in a subdued glow. The place was well fitted up. It had been partitioned off by curtains, looted from somewhere or other by Dwarf Hank. There were rugs on the sandy floor of the cavern, piles of furs were scattered here and there, merchandise of value, clothes, opium, all the general plunder that would be brought to a "fence" who would buy anything of a thief for a song, and trust to luck to sell it in some mart of commerce for at least more than he gave for it.

Frank James winked at his brother and looked about somewhat in wonder. They could not help but think that the dwarf had built up a snug place for himself. As they stood thinking Dwarf Hank saw them and waved his fork at them.

"Come over and get something to take away that weary feeling," he shouted to Jesse, and soon there was no sound save the steady clashing of jaws as the three men ate heartily.

"How do you like this place?" asked Hank at length.

"Fine!" replied Jesse.

"Take a look at it, Frank," added the dwarf. "I think it's pretty slick myself."

Frank strolled about looking at the comfortable abode.

"I got this place in the funniest way," the dwarf added. "One of our boys was hunting a ground hog, and his hole happened to lead into this cavern. There was no outside entrance to it. My man was one of those fellows who would work harder in trying to dig out a woodchuck or ground-hog, than at anything that would pay him better, and finally he dug into the roof of this place. He told me of it after he had lost the ground-hog and I didn't say much, but I dug one day into the place myself and then I found this cavern. There was a lot of snakes and rats in it but I managed to make up my mind that I was better in it than the snakes and rats and I hustled about like a good fellow and with some of the boys fixed up this place—great, isn't it?"

Jesse nodded.

"I think," added the dwarf, "it beats the cabin I had further up the river—but I didn't change the horn's location, Jesse, eh?"

"That's right! If you had I don't know what I'd have done," replied Jesse. "I'm dead sure that we are being pretty hard pressed by that chap. I feel sure that he knows where we are headed to—I don't know why, but I'm afraid that we have our work cut out to escape Maxwell Hyde. He is a pretty slick customer, you know, and isn't easy to get away from. If we don't hustle he may get us."

The dwarf lighted his pipe and crossed his legs in an easy position. The fine ventilation in the cavern was shown by the upward trend of the smoke which was drawn rapidly up through the roof of the cavern, but so easily and imperceptibly, that no one outside could see it escape. Jesse, also, took a pipe and under its mollifying influences was soon whiffing his cares away.

"So you shot up the cashier," murmured the dwarf carelessly.

"I did! I didn't intend to kill him, but shot into the place just intending to puncture his hide a trifle but I cracked him and then we made our sneak. Oh, Frank!"

"What?" replied Frank from a far corner.

"Bring over about five hundred in gold."

The money was soon transferred to the dwarf's hands.

"The James brothers are quick pay, I see," snickered the dwarf. "Say, this gold feels out pretty good to me, doesn't it?"

Both of the outlaws nodded. Frank helped himself to a third pipe and the men puffed away in great content.

They sat for some time smoking, Jesse was the first to break the silence.

"I figure that we can stay here anyway until tonight," he said. "I suppose Maxwell Hyde will follow me as far as our tracks go, but he can't do much when it comes to following us into the river. Water doesn't leave much of a trail."

The other men grunted. They saw the force of Jesse's argument. In fact Jesse was the more calm, and calculating of the men. He planned most of the dashing raids of the outlaws over which he held command and his judgment was so fine that none of the men under him but had a feeling of security in his plans, and felt that he would bring them through in safety. This made much of their dash and fierce attacks and did much toward making them succeed in their looting of banks and railroad trains.

"I'll tell you," added Jesse. "It looks to me as if we were in a fair way to win this trip. I am not afraid of getting away from Maxwell Hyde, all right, but his being after us makes it awkward as to his making me change my plans. You see when Frank and I left home we were out after several games. The stuff we got over there was just the beginning. I have several other games yet to play out. If Maxwell Hyde gets in the way, half my plans go in the air. I don't know just how to block that fellow—"

"Why not lay for him in the bushes," growled Frank. "That will settle it all in a hurry."

Jesse's eyes narrowed to mere slits. An ugly expression came into his face. He was thinking over that plan, but it did not please him, the watching men saw.

"We would make more trouble for ourselves," Jesse decided. "If we pot this fellow we will bring down a posse on us, I am afraid. You see the bankers are pretty well stirred up. I've been doing a pretty heavy banking business lately. In fact I've drawn out of many banks money that I never put in, my only capital being my gun and my nerve. Now, if we shoot this Maxwell Hyde it is going to mean a big fuss everywhere. The bankers will rise up, hire a gang of good men and chase us till they end us once and for all. My plan is to keep this fellow Hyde on the run. Let him chase us. If he chases us expecting every minute or two to catch us we will only have him to deal with. As long as he chases us, all right; when he gets too near and we have to croak him, we will do it, but my plan is to make him chase just as long as we can—make it a run so far as we are concerned, throw him off the scent as often as we can, and, if worse comes to worse, we can do him in the end. What do you think of the plan?"

The dwarf, who was keen and agile in mind, did not answer for some time. Instead he sat gazing into vacancy pulling at his pipe and thinking over all the plans that had been presented to him. He saw in a moment that Jesse had got to the crux of the situation with his usual adroitness. The best thing to do was not to remove the man who was now hot on their trail, but to see whether they could not keep him busily engaged in trying to catch Jesse, while he and Frank adroitly escaped every snare laid for them. Then, with the fascination of the pursuit stifling the fact that it was always a pursuit never an arrest ahead of him, of a long run while Maxwell Hyde could be

"stalled off"; if things came to a shooting show-down later, then there would be time to make a new plan.

"I don't see, but that Jesse is right," the dwarf decided. "He has little to gain by killing Maxwell Hyde now, but he may have to do it later. Just now, if I were you boys, I'd clean up my weapons to see that the river hadn't made them useless, take a good snooze and about eleven o'clock to-night I think I would try my hand at the game of sneaking away."

"I think we had better try this game," replied Frank. "It's the best I see in the cards."

"Then it's settled," replied Jesse, as he began cleaning his revolvers and his rifle, an act that was followed by Frank.

The two men then tied the loot they had secured into a smaller sack. The gold was equally divided and placed in their saddle bags. The bank-notes were tied in the two leather belts that the men had with them, and thus the result of their murderous robbery was held in halves by each brother, the idea that if one was captured all of the money would not be found upon him.

"Say, how much do you think we got?" asked Frank of Jesse, after the plunder was thus distributed.

"I don't know," replied Jesse in an indifferent tone.

"Pretty near \$40,000."

"That's pretty fair for a country bank to yield up."

"Struck me that way too."

"Came pretty easy. Who would have thought that fool cashier would have had that money so easy to get—why, he even had the combination of the safe in his vest pocket!"

"That's the way they do in these country banks. They keep the combination of their safes in their pocket-book. They were tin-pan safes at that. It would not take ten cents worth of nitro-glycerin to blow them open—that's right, no, it looked to me if I hadn't got the combination off that cashier I could have broken into that safe with a tooth-pick."

"Well, it paid this trip, and next game I hope won't be so easy."

"I'm going to turn the next trick alone," cried Jesse. "It's a new one I'm going to put over. Don't you say a word but let me give you the plan now."

The heads of the outlaw brothers came nearer and nearer. They mumbled away carelessly but steadily. Now and then Frank gave a muttered exclamation of wonder. This would be followed by more explanations and now and then Frank's smothered laugh was to be heard.

"It's a daring plan," at length remarked Frank. "I am surprised at your nerve, Jesse, but it's dollars to doughnuts that we will carry it through!"

The men then sank their voices lower and lower, Jesse doing most of the talking and Frank listening with a nod to punctuate the words of his brother. They thus talked for nearly an hour, and then Jesse threw himself on a pile of furs and in a jiffy was fast asleep, while Frank remained awake. The two hunted outlaws, unless they were in a place they knew to be absolutely safe, did not take chances of both sleeping at the same time.

At the end of an hour of slumber Jesse awoke as if an alarm clock had exploded under his nose and sat bold upright. Frank without a word sank on the pile of furs and was asleep, it seemed, before he was fairly down, while Jesse lighted his pipe and took up the

watching vigil. Thus they slept until eleven o'clock and then Frank, who happened to be on watch, arose, stretched himself and yawned and followed by his more famous brother, softly stole to the entrance of the tent where Dwarf Hank was awaiting them. Not a word was spoken on either side until they had got to the entrance of the tunnel that marked the concealed home of the dwarf.

The trio halted in front of the timbers as the dwarf fumbled with the bolt that held them in place.

"It's all right to step out boldly," Dwarf Hank murmured in a low tone. "I have a man out there hidden in the thicket. No one can see him and he would see any one that tried to sneak up on us. Your horses are ready. They have been rubbed down and fed. You take a trail that leads up the bluff to the left and follow it to the high ground. It comes out into a road. Keep to the road until you come to a fork in it—then take the right hand road. It will take you where you want to go. Don't be afraid of Maxwell Hyde getting by us. If he comes this way we won't have much talk with him. I ain't so squeemish as you are. If he gets in my way I'll plant him with his boots on. Hee! Hee! Hee!"

The dwarf then opened the timbers, and Jesse and Frank slowly slid into the open air again.

The two outlaws stood motionless. The night was clear, but it was the dim clearness of the stars that they faced. There about them assumed strange bulks. They could see at their feet the great Missouri winding along. The call of night birds sounded startlingly in their ears. There was the usual hum of insect life, but neither man paid the slightest attention to these sounds, though Jesse gave one all covering careful glance in every direction. Nothing in any way appeared to show danger, and with a grunt of pleasure he vaulted on his horse, and as noiselessly as possible followed the trail which made a white-ribbon-like path beneath his horse's feet. Frank followed on behind carefully, but each of the outlaws held in their hands their revolvers ready for a surprise attack.

Not a single straw blew in the way of the two outlaws, however. They soon had negotiated the trail and had struck into the high road, and, although it was sandy, and heavy, as most Missouri roads were at this period, they had no trouble in striking a long swinging gait that carried them along at a smart pace. Neither man spoke and when they reached the fork in the road that turned to the right, still silent and without change of pace, Jesse led the way in the direction the road took and, as the going became better, increased his speed.

By three o'clock they were thirty miles away from the cavern of the ugly little dwarf, and their horses began to show signs of distress. They had kept steadily at work since about eleven o'clock of the previous night and while on better roads better time would have been made, the miles covered, under the circumstances, was a wonderful bit of hard riding.

As soon as Jesse saw from a slight hill a tiny hamlet nestling in the valley below, he struck off across country and in a secreted spot in the bottom land along the shores of the turgid Missouri River, fed and breathed and rubbed down their horses, and when the beasts were freshened they started in the direction of the town.

"You know your end of the game?" queried Jesse of his brother.

"As well as if we had rehearsed it time and again," blithely came the answer.

"Then we will start now. It's about five o'clock. We ought to turn this trick and get off in a few minutes—it's easy to me—we don't have to take much time."

"Look out, Jesse," cried Frank when he saw by the ugly look that the mood was sweeping over his brother when he was the most dangerous. "Take care! Don't get too brash! Don't forget that if you have a gun the other fellow may have one too."

Jesse smiled wanly and at a fast lope darted into the town followed by his brother. They rode with purpose but in no way carried weapons. As was customary their revolvers dangled from their belts, and from their saddles other weapons could be seen hanging, but the arrival of two strange horsemen at a fast lope in a quiet Missouri town was not looked upon by any of the people lazily seated before various business houses in the late afternoon sun as anything out of the ordinary.

No one recognized the two riders as they dashed forward. Not a soul knew that the quiet, although well armed men were the outlaws whose names made little children shudder, and who were used to conjure up a picture of recklessness in the minds of older people.

The two men swung down the street. The town was only half awake. It was nearing the time for general business closing and the few customers in the various places idly turned to watch the two men.

When the half stone, half brick building in the center of the town was reached over which was a sign bearing the single magic word, "Bank," Jesse stopped his horse, calmly handed the reins of his bridle to Frank, drew a bit of tobacco from his pocket, took a chew and as he did so looked up and down the street.

The action was such a natural one that no one who saw the two boys marveled greatly. It was simply two men hurrying to transact some business at the bank before it closed, to the eye of a clerk who was just putting up the shutters to a grocery store opposite the bank.

But by his action Jesse had taken a comprehensive view of the street in either direction. He had seen that save for the clerk opposite, there was no human being in sight. There were two dogs quarreling over a bone in the center of the street. Further in the direction the two men had come was another man who was walking away from them with a parcel in his arm. A woman with a sun bonnet was just going into another store, while still further in the picture Jesse saw a third human being, another woman with a pitcher of milk in her hand.

"Safe!" murmured Jesse to Frank. "I won't be long. When I rush out and get mounted you halt until I get started and cover my escape. Then you dash on behind. If we get cornered try and get back to the dwarf's but I don't think it will come to that. There isn't anything that can give us a fight in the street any way. Watch out, Frank!"

"Be careful, Jesse," came the reply. "Don't take fool risks!"

For an answer Jesse strode into the bank, and Frank loosened his revolver so it would pull easily and waited with bated breath the return of his fighting outlaw brother.

CHAPTER IV.

A BOLD ROBBERY.

When Jesse James walked into the bank his swift glances took in the entire condition within it in a trice.

His eyes noted that there was a large room one side of which had been partitioned off. These were the business parts of the bank, the various little compartments being partitioned off by partly wooden and partly wire bulwarks.

All of these cages were not occupied as Jesse entered. The clerks appeared to have gone home. The central compartment was occupied by an elderly pleasant faced man, who sat on a high stool, facing a small runway which led back toward a door which was shut.

The other side of the room was also partitioned off. It held a desk and a telephone. There was a long table in the little private office and the door bore the word "President" in gilt.

Jesse's glance roved to the safe behind the pleasant faced man. It was open he saw. There was also a great pile of green-backs directly in front of the man, and little bags of gold and silver, which made the outlaw's mouth water.

But when Jesse saw the face of the man in the compartment turned toward him with an expression of inquiry about it, Jesse strode up to the window in the partition and pulling a hundred dollar bill from his pocket handed it to the pleasant faced man.

The man took the bill. He looked at it and then at Jesse.

"I wanted to know if that bill is all right," said Jesse in his low, clear confident tone of voice. "I took it in on a deal to-day and some of my friends say it is no good."

The pleasant faced man did what Jesse expected him to do. He grasped the bill in both hands and held it up in the air and looked scrutinizingly through the bill to examine it as to texture and water-marks in the paper on which the printing had been done.

With his hands in the air grasping the bill, the bank official was just in the position that Jesse had anticipated.

"Don't put your hands down or I'll blow your head off," whispered Jesse, as he flashed his gun in the surprised man's face. "Don't you move or you're a dead man."

The stranger's face turned white. His eyes bulged and his mouth opened slowly as he saw the stranger's revolver in his brawny hand stare at him. He knew that the slightest motion he made would be his last, and as if frozen to the spot in his horror he still grasped the bill by both hands held it at about a level with the top of his head and thus stood dazed and transfixed.

Jesse easily leaned through the opening in the desk and while his right hand kept his cocked and ready revolver trained on the banker's head, his left hand deftly gathered up the bank bills, stuffed them into the sack nearest to him, emptied all the other sacks into the one with the bills and then he spoke again.

"My men have rifles turned on you. If you dare move for half an hour they will riddle your hide!" the outlaw murmured with a menace in his tone that caused the blood of the banker to run cold in his veins.

Then, still with revolver presented, Jesse backed toward the front door and when he reached the open air, thrust the revolver into his pocket and with quick

though not running feet regained his horse and mounted him.

"Don't go too fast," Jesse said in a low tone to his brother, "Don't excite suspicion. You may trot easily and then break into a natural lope."

There was not a sign in the street that anything had been seen to excite suspicion. The conditions were almost exactly the same as when Jesse had vanished into the bank. The grocery store clerk was still idly putting up the shutters having arrived at the last one. This he held suspended as he gazed at the two men, who so unemotionally were riding away. Except to think that the business transacted was brief, considering the haste with which the two strangers came to transact it, the clerk thought nothing further. Up the street the two women had joined forces and the other person first seen had vanished. One dog had secured the bone and was eating it while the bereft dog snarled at the victor.

"Not a thing to stop us," muttered Jesse. "We win again! We take the second trick."

The progress out of town was quickly made.

"Let her go now!" cried Jesse, as soon as the last house had vanished.

The words had hardly left his mouth when there was a shot heard behind them. It darted in a volume of sound, and when he heard it Jesse gave his horse a jab with his spur and darted along the road as fast as the animal could go.

"The old fool has given the alarm," bawled Jesse. "Now it's up to us to hurry!"

Other shots followed the second. The town awoke with a roar to the startlingly news that the bank had been held up, and there was a hurrying of feet, a great rushing of men, and a fierce firing of revolvers. Like all the raids of the James boys they had so carefully planned the details that when the affrighted citizens awoke to a knowledge of just what had happened the raid was over and the two outlaws far away.

The citizens poured into the bank where the trembling official told how he had been held up, the narrative not losing anything in the telling. His story was listened to in wonder by his friends and neighbors, and when the entire history had been related and thoughts of pursuit were followed by action, the outlaws were so far away that nothing but a fruitless scampering about the country ensued.

It was now only a few moments after six o'clock in the early twilight, and as Jesse and Frank bowled along they tried to increase rather than diminish their speed.

They rushed down a hill at a break-neck gallop and at the bottom, just as they were racing into the bottom-land, Frank's horse stumbled, tried to keep a-foot and then went heels over head like a rabbit. Frank fell upon the earth with a thud that sounded ominously and Jesse reined in his steed and was just starting back to aid his insensible brother when the form of a man rose from behind a tree and without warning began firing at Jesse. He instinctively caught the flash of the weapon and pulled hard at the animal's head. The frightened horse reared just in time to catch the bullet, and with a great bound it staggered to its knees, and as Jesse kicked his feet loose from the confining stirrups, the gallant beast gave a faint shuddering sigh and turned over on its side—stone dead.

Jesse popped down beside the dead beast, plucked

out his revolver and fired point blank at the form ahead. He missed.

Another revolver began sounding to the left and Jesse saw that he was hemmed in between two fires. He was in deadly peril. But he kept his wits about him and rolled over and over until he had gotten near to where Frank's horse stood trembling from head to foot. Jesse vaulted on the animal's back and then rushed over to his brother. He tried to pick up the insensible man, but the bullets that went singing by him showed him that he was only sacrificing his own life without saving his brother.

He saw Frank open his eyes in a dazed way.

"I'll come back and help you, Frank," Jesse cried, as he clapped his spurs to his horse and went bounding across country while with a shout of glee Maxwell Hyde ran toward the outlaw who was now sitting up in the road and feebly fumbling for his revolver.

Hyde, knowing the man he was dealing with, took no chances but threw his arms about those of Frank James and with the aid of his fellow traveler, Fred Felton, bound the bandit with strong rope, placed him, like a sack of wheat before him, and as rapidly as circumstances would permit rode back to the village where his arrival was followed by a rush of men, who howled in frenzy when they saw that one of the men who had held up their bank was returning a prisoner.

Maxwell Hyde was overjoyed at his success. He rapidly told how it had all happened. It appeared that Maxwell Hyde and Felton saw the fleeing outlaws coming a mile away, and they had quickly stretched a lariat across the rough road about as high as the knees of the horses that were racing toward them expecting that the animals would thus be thrown. The horse bestrode by Jesse James, however, had escaped the lure, but that of Frank James had been caught and thrown. While the horse was uninjured Frank had been stunned by being thrown into the road, and Jesse had escaped instant death by his little ruse in rearing his horse to catch the bullet intended for him.

When Maxwell Hyde searched Frank James and found the money secreted in the leather belt about his body underneath his clothing, his joy was boundless.

"Was there ever such good luck," Maxwell Hyde cried to Fred Felton. "Think of it? We have got back a good share of the plunder and one of the outlaws."

There was a good deal of disappointment felt over finding none of the money looted in the second bank hold-up, but it was evident that Jesse, who had engineered this plot had the money in his possession; anyway, they had one of the robbers and that was a great deal for Maxwell Hyde explained that he had been on the bandits' trail for weeks and this was his first bit of luck he had experienced.

"What are you going to do with him?" asked one of the townsmen.

"Take him back to Milton," smiled Maxwell Hyde. "He will last about ten minutes there. They will lynch him!"

"I will be the one to pull the rope about the dastard's neck," murmured Fred Felton, and when it was related that his brother had been killed when the Milton bank was raided, it was with difficulty that the mob was restrained from lynching the outlaw right there.

In answer to the pleadings of Maxwell Hyde and the oft repeated statement by Fred Felton that Frank James ought not to be hanged except in the town where the last murder of the two famous outlaws had been committed, the mob desisted, and Frank, manacled and bound, was placed in a room in the upper story of the bank, with three men as guards over him, while Maxwell Hyde and Fred Felton went to the only hotel in the town to rest.

Gradually after the entire population had peeped at the bandit, whose fame was such that in the town he created quite as much curiosity as a circus, the crowd thinned out and Frank James was left to view the desperate situation in which he found himself. He was bound hand and foot with heavy cord. His hands were tied behind his back and then handcuffs of chilled steel were slipped on his wrists. His legs were shackled with steel chains padlocked so tightly that he could not move, and he was tied to a heavy chair by his captors, and it was decided that he should remain in his present situation until the next day when a posse of twenty men would accompany Maxwell Hyde and Fred Felton back to Milton, where Frank was to be delivered over to the authorities, with the tacit understanding that when the jail was raided later there was to be no great opposition to the onslaught of the mob, who would save the county some expenses in the way of a trial by the lynching of the prisoner.

Frank James gave himself up for lost. He knew that Jesse could do nothing alone and an organized attack with the town aroused could never win him his liberty. In fact Frank James knew that to all intents and purposes he was even now not much better than a dead man, and he sat with snarling rage depicted on his face, as later in the night men and women again began to drop in to jeer at him and make sport over his arrest. The outlaw gave himself up to distressing forebodings and his heart sank lower and lower as he felt how impossible it was that he might escape.

CHAPTER V.

A COUNTRYMAN CALLS.

It was along about midnight that Frank James awoke from an uneasy slumber in which a gallows figured plainly, as he heard an altercation going on in the hall way. He heard his guards laugh at some uncouth joke and after a time a grinning, tall, broad shouldered countryman, with his tattered, barn-yard stained trousers tucked in the top of his boots and a wide smile of simpering embarrassment on his face, sidled into the room and open-mouthed gazed in silence at the bandit.

He said nothing but looked as if he would never see another outlaw in this world and wanted to see all that there was possible of the one before him. After he had stood by the side of one of the guards and had looked his fill he wiggled away and Frank heard the sound of his voice loudly saying that he was surprised that an outlaw did not look much different from any other man.

"Say, fellers," the countryman cried. "Thet caout-lor aint no great shakes. I cud lick 'im with one hand tied behind me back. Say, will you fellers licker wit me? I gin a bottle o' prime pisinup ter the hotel."

The laughing guards had no objection to a drink when it came so easy as the one in the big bottle, and

the laughter grew louder and louder as the party drank more and more freely of the liquor.

Frank James' heart was bitter within him. His bones ached from his fall. He did not know whether Jesse was dead or alive or whether he too was a prisoner. He in fact was utterly in the dark as to what had happened after his horse had fallen with him, and while he had heard the explanation that had been given for his fall, was angry to think how easily after all he had been captured when it looked as if he was escaping. The ease with which he had been caught was an added incentive to his wrath and he swore lustily over his plight and that of Jesse, whom he saw had done the only possible thing to do under the circumstances and had scampered away with what he could of their ill-gotten wealth.

The bottle seemed to be passing rapidly now. He could hear one of the guards laughing in the aimless tones of a drunken man—then there came a silence.

"Ish gittin' sleepshy," he heard a maudlin voice say, and then there was a strange silence and a snore brought Frank, seated as he was and bound, to almost a standing position.

"What's that?" Frank murmured. "A snore! What does this mean?"

He saw a form steal into the room. It was that of the countryman—no, it was—who was it?

Frank peered at the figure which stole over to his side and with a big knife began cutting his bonds. A key unlocked the handcuffs upon the prisoner's wrist. A second key loosened the padlocks upon his leg and left them free. Frank tried to rise but he tottered back and forth. His long confinement in bonds had made it almost impossible for him to move. But he felt a hand begin lustily to rub him.

A bottle was placed to his dry lips and a fiery dram warmed his heart. He heard a voice whisper. Whose was it? Why—the sight and feeling came back to the doomed man with a rush.

The form of the countryman seemed to sink away and in its place stood Jesse James, cool smiling and as he thrust a revolver into Frank's hands, the prisoner knew in a flash that here stood his brother bound to rescue him or die with him.

"How in — did you turn this trick," cried Frank. "Shut up, you idiot!" answered Jesse. "Can you walk? If you can follow me."

Frank nodded. Then he stole softly after Jesse. The two men saw a strange picture when they tiptoed into the ante-room. The three guards lay on the floor fast asleep, all snoring beautifully.

"Drunk?" asked Frank.

"Drugged!" replied Jesse. "I hocussed their stuff. They won't wake up for a week."

Frank now fully understood. Jesse had gained entrance to him disguised as a countryman and had provided himself with a large bottle of drugged liquor. He had induced the guards to drink freely of the stuff and, after they had gone to sleep and were in a stupor, had searched each man until he had found the keys that unlocked the handcuffs and the padlock, and then after he had cut the rope with which his brother was further confined, had armed him and had hurried off at his best speed, with the freed prisoner.

"Say, what are you going to do next?" asked Frank.

"Come along and don't talk," replied Jesse.

They had no difficulty in walking out unobserved

into the street, and as they reached the bottom step they saw several men approaching them. Jesse began to stagger about and lean up against Frank, who sensed the situation in a moment and led his supposed drunken friend down the street, as he made rail fences in his faltering way.

"That's all right," a voice said. "It's that countryman who was at the hotel with a jag early in the night. He's only half baked. Wanted to see an 'earthlor' as he called it. Let him get along with his friend."

"Wisht I had a quarter of that load," another voice laughed and the two outlaws, still playing the part of a drunken man and a friend trying to take him home, staggered away, and were soon lost in the shadows of the country street.

Jesse straightened up quickly as soon as he thought it safe to do so, and the two brothers with their revolvers pressed close to their sides so that no light would flash from them, rushed along as fast as they dared and soon were out in the open again, but horseless and expecting every moment to hear the noise of a hue and cry break forth. In that case all they could do was to take to the brush and fight it out with the flood of men that the daring escape would let loose upon the country. Each one of the outlaws knew that if they were pursued and caught that they would be lynched without further ceremony. Their captors would never allow them to escape instant death a second time.

"Come on!" murmured Jesse. "We haven't any time to lose!"

The two men soon reached the outskirts of the settlements that led up to the village proper and after a bit they very boldly took to the highway until after a time they came to a frame house. There was no light in the house and Jesse halted. The house was on one side of the narrow highway. On the other was a large red-painted barn with a cupola. Jesse led the way to the barn.

"My plan," he explained, "is to get in the barn, steal a couple of horses and ride away as fast as we can."

"But when the horses move," objected Frank, "the people in the house will hear and we will have a fight on our hands in a minute."

"Don't worry about any fight," rejoined Jesse. "I have a plan that will let us get the horses in there—if there's any horses in there to get."

"What is the plan?"

"We will hunt around until we get a blanket and then we will tie a bit of the blanket about each foot of each horse."

"Good scheme! Tear up the blanket into strips, eh?"

"That's my idea."

"It's an excellent one. The sound of the horses' hoofs upon the wooden floor will be muffled and we can keep them on the animals until we are well out of ear shot."

"That's it! I wonder if there's an — dog about here?"

"Don't think so."

"Why not?"

"If there had been he would have bayed at us before this—what is that?"

The speaker jumped in the air as he spoke. Something was rubbing against his knee.

"Oh, it's a cat," snapped Jesse a moment later. "If

it had been an elephant it could not have frightened me more."

"You jumped as if you'd seen a posse," snickered Frank. "I was frightened myself when you jumped. I thought some one had stuck a knife in me."

"Laugh if you want to. You were not laughing when I saw you first to-night. How do you think I got to you?"

"I know how."

"I mean how do you think I found where you were confined?"

"Dunno. Tell me, please."

"Well, when those fellows took that fall out of you—I owe Maxwell Hyde one for it, even if it was a slick trick—I made that old-hoss of ours do his best licks. I was dead sure that he would not get away for I thought while Maxwell Hyde attended to you that side partner of his would take up the chase after me—by the way, who is that fellow?"

"His name is Fred Felton. He's the brother of the cashier we croaked in the Milton raid."

"Phew!" said Jesse, with a sharp intake of his breath. "Then we were in a lot of trouble. I hated to croak that cashier. You know I didn't mean to kill the —. But I'm such a good shot that I got him the only shot I fired in the whole hold-up."

"Well, never mind him. He's dead. It's his brother that's bothering me, just now—no, the brother stayed behind to make sure of me and well, they got me all right."

"For a little while. Well, when I found that I wasn't being pursued, I took a circle and soon saw you go by on one of the horses of those fellows. I had half a mind to shoot the two men, but then this plan I have just pulled off flashed through my mind. Things are getting so hot for us that I made up my mind it wasn't going to pay me to do any more shooting. Besides we were so near town that even if I'd got both those fellows it wouldn't do us any good. My horse was no good. Your horse I mean—for mine was dead and I didn't figure that we had a swell chance to escape on a half foundered horse, the two of us with a posse freshly mounted streaming after us, and you know what would have happened quick if we had shot those two fellows, Maxwell Hyde and Fred Felton on top of the croaking of that cashier—"

"I know what would have happened if we had not escaped and I was taken back to Milton."

Jesse laughed. He well knew what would have happened and he wasn't sure as yet that the trick was not going to be turned by the enemy after all.

"My story is soon told now," he added. "I made up my mind to follow after you. I was running along on foot through the underbrush so no one would see me when I came across a half drunken fellow who was wearing this suit I have on. I poked him one in the nose and when he was out and on his back I took his clothes, put them on over mine because he was larger than I—and the rest you know."

"To my profit," laughed Frank. "It was certainly a splendid thought on your part, Jesse, and it saved my life."

The men waited for some time in silence. They stood under the shelter of a corn-crib and were so silent and still that nothing in the way of the usual wild animals that infest a farm saw them or if they did were alarmed by them. A fox after chickens scampered by, stopped,

scented the two men but made no effort to escape. He was of the animal outlaw world and recognized his human fellow. A rat squeaked and scuttered over Jesse's feet, but when he saw who it was, did not seem to care to escape. An owl hooted in a maple tree its long sweet note gurgling in its throat, and making the scene more solitary and lonely.

"Well?" asked Frank of his brother finally.

"I wanted to be dead sure that we were not to be disturbed," Jesse replied. "I think we are safe to make a movement now."

Jesse's next step was to softly open a window in the barn. When he had entered the building he found it very dark but there was enough glimmer of light for him to see a fanning-machine standing behind a lumber-wagon, and then he heard soft breathing, and after his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, he saw four horses standing in a row. Directly in front of each stall in which stood a horse, was a big peg on which hung saddles and bridles.

"How's that for luck?" Jesse murmured to himself. "Saddles and horses all ready. Now then to tell Frank."

First Jesse crawled back out of the window and quietly informed Frank of the good luck that had befallen them. Then he returned and finding the best horses in the lot as well as he could in the darkness, saddled and bridled two and then cast about until he had found a horse blanket. With his hunting knife he cut the blanket into strips which he wound about each of the hoofs of both horses tying each shield above the fet-locks of the animal. The result was a perfectly soft pad for the animal to step upon, and one bound not to make a noise as the horse tramped over the hard timber floor out into the stable-yard.

There Jesse met Frank who held both horses until the window had been closed through which entry had been made to the stable, and the door out of which the horses had been led had been firmly secured. Then the two outlaws mounted and at a foot-pace started off into the calm night, which soon enveloped them and melted away the outlines of the barn. Thus the men proceeded for a mile, and then they took off the bits of blanket from the horses' feet and, after Frank had buried the blanket bits near a tree so that they would not be left openly in the road as a mute bit of evidence that the outlaws had passed this way, the two brothers struck a faster pace and steadily placed miles between them and the town where Frank had so narrowly escaped lynching.

"We didn't come out of that game as well as we might," remarked Frank after a hustling ride of three or four miles, when the horses were slowed up to breath them.

"N-o-o," answered Jesse. "They got to part of our cash that we had struck in the Milton hold-up."

"That's right. They took all of my cash."

"Who took it?"

"Maxwell Hyde."

"Hum!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Oh, I had a thought."

"That is you thought out a plan?"

"Something like that."

"I suppose the plan was concerned with how you might get back the cash Maxwell Hyde took?"

"It was."

"Not a chance to do that is there?"

Jesse did not reply. His mind was coping with the idea that would not leave him that there might be thought up a way to get back the money that Maxwell Hyde had taken from Frank. It seemed on its face an impossible plan that had popped into his mind, but Jesse could not get the thought out of his mind that possibly he could make his ideas succeed. However, before he made a final decision he thought best to further question his brother.

"Say, Frank," asked Jesse. "Have you ever been in this part of the world before?"

"Oh, yes, I've been here quite often. I'm pretty familiar with the country hereabouts."

"Where is Milton from here?"

"Over to the left about six or seven miles. You see we have made a direct trip and have cut cross-country—we aren't more than six or seven miles from there; the place you held up back there is called North Milton and the bank there is a branch of the Milton bank where we croaked that cashier."

"Yes, I knew that—but I didn't know much about the lay of the two places because it requires a Philadelphia lawyer to read one of those confounded road-maps of this part of the country. I've studied the one I have but your description helps me a lot, don't you know. I see where we are now."

"Well, that's about all I can tell you."

"Now in going from North Milton to Milton, how would a man travel?"

"Hoss-back, rig, or afoot."

"Don't be funny. You're not cut out for comedy-parts. Tell me the question. It's important."

"All right?" rejoined Frank. "Well, if a man was going from North Milton to Milton he would take a road that will come into this one about three miles further along."

"Oh, I begin to understand. That is he would get on this road eventually from a divergent road that leads to this one."

"Yes."

"Then all we have to do to get into touch with travel between North Milton and Milton is to keep on this present road for a few miles where we are sure to reach finally the road that brings all Milton and North Milton travelers on our road?"

"Exactly."

"How do we know when we reach the spot where the Milton road—that's its name isn't it?—and the road we are on intersect?"

"Yes, it's known as the Milton road. This is the Marsh road. When we came out of the village back there we struck into this road instead of the Milton road by accident. They all lead to the same place."

"Is there anything there where the two roads meet?"

"There's an old fashioned tavern."

"Ah, an old fashioned tavern?"

"A good one too."

"Travelers between North Milton and Milton stop at this tavern, do they not?"

"Yes."

Jesse said no more but started forward at a gentle amble and soon the outlines of the tavern, just shaping themselves into lines of curious shapes struck their eyes because they were now riding in the early hours of the morning and the animal world, they could hear, was beginning to wake at the coming of another day.

Jesse made no remark but walked his horse boldly up to a horse block and drinking trough and while the animal drank greedily, Jesse stretched forth the whip he carried in his right hand and struck a thundering rap on the door of the tavern, with its metallic end. The door opened at once. The face of Maxwell Hyde peeped out at the two outlaws. The detective for the Bankers' Guild recognized Jesse James as quickly as Jesse recognized him. Behind Maxwell Hyde stared the face of Fred Felton, Maxwell Hyde's self-constituted assistant.

CHAPTER VI.

A BOLD OUTLAW'S STROKE.

Although surprised the presence of mind of the outlaw did not desert him. His hand flashed to his revolver and the round, unwinking barrel, was gazing into the face of Maxwell Hyde in a breath.

"Hands up!" whispered Jesse James. "Quick—you!"

There was no hesitation on the part of Maxwell Hyde. He knew when it was safe and when it was not safe to disobey such a command; in this case he decided that it was unsafe to disobey.

If the motion of Jesse had been quick in drawing his weapon that of his brother Frank, was equally quick. He had accepted the situation quite as quickly as had his brother and his weapon was out and trained on the head of Fred Felton quite as quick as a wink, and thus in the space of a second of time the two outlaws had "the drop" on their enemies, and the situation in their own hands with amazing celerity.

"Don't you move," murmured Jesse to his man. "It's death to bat your eye, Maxwell! I'm gunning for you!"

Maxwell Hyde showed his bravery and his gun-training by not moving a muscle. There was a faint smile on his face which indicated some amusement in the way he had been trapped. By one of those curious freaks of fate he and Fred Felton had just arrived at the tavern. There had been a tremendous sensation when it was found that the guards of the famous bandit, Frank James, had been drugged and that the prisoner had escaped. Maxwell Hyde had been notified at his inn and he had hurried to the scene, but by the time he had organized several men into a party of riders fit to chase the outlaws, Jesse and Frank were well on their way to the Milton road, and after a vain search, much unnecessary surmises as to how it had all happened, the decision was made that Maxwell Hyde and Fred Felton return rapidly to Milton, inform the authorities there of the escape of Frank, and start out a general posse of men to search the country, as it was not thought that Frank was aided by Jesse James in his escape, and it was supposed that he was walking aimlessly about in a vain endeavor to escape.

Maxwell Hyde knew better, however. He had expert knowledge of the work of the outlaw, and he sensed in his own mind that Jesse and Frank had gotten together and felt that they would break into some farmer's barn and would steal horses with which to continue their journey; but that when he had just entered a tavern, heard a knock at the door, turned and opened the front-door to have a big revolver poked in his face, and the man he was thinking about, say to him in a quiet voice, "hands-up," was something that he had not bargained for—yet here he was with his hands

high in the air; there stood the form of Jesse and Frank James, grimly insistent. It was all an amusing episode only he was not sure how long he was going to live to enjoy it.

Jesse James gave Maxwell Hyde information on the latter point directly.

"Get their guns," Jesse snapped to Frank. Frank was off his horse and had disarmed both Maxwell Hyde and Fred Felton in a moment.

"Don't forget that money-belt," Jesse said in the same calm, yet deadly and ominous voice.

Frank smirked as he went through Maxwell Hyde's pockets again, and took all his personal money and most of his jewels leaving only a cheap watch which he said wasn't worth "lifting." The missing money-belt was found leaden with bills about Maxwell Hyde's waist, and Frank dexterously removed it and transferred it to his own person. Then Frank robbed Fred Felton of the few dollars he had in his pockets, backed away from the two men still with his gun handy and jumped on his horse.

"Just one word, Maxwell Hyde," murmured Jesse. "I'm going to give you a tip. Get off this search after me or I'll plant you. See?"

The two outlaws whirled their horses and spurring them into their fastest paces rushed away from the scene and disappeared into the fast lightening darkness, and in less time than it takes to tell of it were in full cry of escape. They well knew that as soon as he could secure arms that Maxwell Hyde would be on their trail again, and they determined to put as much space between their pursuer and themselves as possible. With this end in view they did not slacken rein or stop spurring for a long distance.

When they finally rested Jesse looked about. It was broad daylight. They were on a road at least ten miles from where they had held up Maxwell Hyde, and as they could look back several miles they were sure that they were not now being pursued by any foe within a few miles at least.

"Good work, Jesse," cried Frank. "We got back the Milton bank boodle!"

"We did all right," rejoined Jesse. "I thought up a general plan and it was to see if we couldn't get back that missing pelf and there, when I knocked at that door, out popped, that devilish Maxwell Hyde. Say, I almost fell off my horse with pleasure! I got my gun out quick though. It was lucky for that chap Maxwell Hyde is a good gun-man and if one don't draw quick on him, one don't get a second chance. He's dead before he begins."

"That's right! But you pulled so quick he didn't have a look in."

"He was a wise guy. I wanted to kill him right then, but I knew if I did we wouldn't ever get the money-belt. He would have been shot all right, but the noise of the shot would have brought some one on the run and we would have had to escape before we could have got the belt off his body—oh, it was better this way but my fingers itched to kill him. It was luck I hadn't thought of the way he had you tied up—I think if I had I'd let him have had it, but it's better as it turned out. We have the pelf, and say, that's a pretty good gun that you got off Maxwell Hyde?"

"You bet it is! It's a magazine gun, central-fire, and has all the modern quirks to it—it's one of the new

guns that are just being put out, and you hear me it's a pippin! Do you want Fred Felton's gun?"

"Any good?"

"Yes. It's a good weapon."

"I'll give it to Cole Younger when we get home. He's off on a game like this with some of the others of the boys but he is the most careless fellow in the world with his guns. He kinder sheds guns. He never goes off on a raid that he doesn't seem to come back shy a few revolvers—I'll give it to him if you don't want it?"

"I don't want it."

The outlaws watched the sunrise and then they began to feel hungry. Jesse, who was the pink of politeness when he wanted to be, stopped at the first farm house they passed and after explaining that he and his brother were men interested in farm mortgages, asked permission to purchase a breakfast for each of the travelers; the farmer's wife not only prepared a substantial meal for the outlaws, but was so charmed with their good manners that she refused any money.

"You fellers better be careful," the woman said at length.

"Why?" asked Jesse.

"You know the James boys?"

"N-o-o," meditatively replied Jesse. "I don't know as I do—are they from these parts?"

"Oh, no. They are from Clay County."

"Who are they?" queried Frank.

"Outlaws of the worst sort. Say, they would kill you as quick as they would eat. They ain't afraid of nothin' and, say, you fellers better keep away from the James boys—they'd shoot and rob you in a minute and you boys all seem to be nice decent fellers."

"We are," cried Jesse. "We are the best that ever!"

"How do you know the James boys are about here?" asked Frank as he exchanged glances with Jesse.

"There was a feller here a little while ago, oh, 'bout two hours. He an' another feller was lookin' fer them James boys—"

"What kind of a looking fellow was he?"

"Blondish, well-favored and set up man."

"Maxwell Hyde," whispered Jesse. Frank, however, wanted more light so he continued his questions.

"Any one else with the well favored fellow?" Frank asked of the woman.

"Younger man. Didn't say much. Nice looking chap, though."

"Fred Felton," murmured Jesse.

"Well, so long," added Jesse to the woman, "we are many times obliged to you."

His courtly bow was met with a low courtesy. He grinned as he rode off with his brother, while the woman mollified by the excessive politeness shown to her hoped in her heart that the two strangers "would not meet up with them horrible James boys."

Jesse and Frank rode on for a good stretch without speaking. Then Frank asked Jesse his opinion of what the woman had said.

"I think she's right," Jesse said. "Maxwell Hyde isn't the kind of man to overlook any bets. I think that he probably recovered his wits the second we were out of the way, and got weapons and a posse together and is now scouring the country-side for us—"

"He was this way it seems two hours ago."

"That's probably right. A horse can gallop quite a good many miles in two hours. If Maxwell Hyde and Fred Felton were here two hours ago it is no sign that they are here now. My idea is that they and their friends are scouring the countryside for us. Every road is being traveled over—and that is about all we can do about it."

"Can we escape?"

"I don't know. We can at least try."

"Y-e-s. But every minute our danger is more and more, for the men who are chasing us are getting nearer and nearer."

"I know. I'm doing all I can. We will try our best to escape, but it's not sure that we will, you know. The best of men in our game get pinched or planted sooner or later."

The brothers went into a brown study. Jesse, who as leader, felt the full responsibilities of the situation that faced them, was rather hopeless of escape. He knew that his daring had thoroughly roused the countryside. Two looted banks and one dead cashier, three guards drugged, and a lot of money taken from two banking institutions all in the space of a few days and within a few miles of each other had stirred that part of Missouri to fever heat. So intense was this feeling that all work appeared to have been suspended in favor of the outlaw hunt. Jesse smiled grimly to himself when he saw, as he and Frank rode along, farm-houses deserted of all male help, for the road and the outlaw chase!

Quick to see anything that might be turned to his advantage Jesse stopped in front of a substantial farm-house and seeing no one about he boldly walked up to the door of the house and knocked. No answer came. Jesse knocked again. Still no answer. He then pushed open the door which was not locked, and found himself in a well furnished room, with evidence of thrift all about him. A clock was ticking on a shelf; a dinner, was on the table, but no one but the house-cat seemed to be about. Jesse smiled to himself.

"They have all gone bandit hunting," he murmured. "Now really I would like to know whether they are going to catch the James boys or not?"

The thought lingered in his mind, but it was knocked into a cocked-hat by Frank's opening the door and with rather white face announcing a piece of bad news to the effect that a half dozen men were whipping and spurring their horses on a hill about a mile away.

"Our horses are blown and can go no further," Jesse whispered. "Well, now Frank we can't get off on our cattle?"

"No, we can't!"

"We haven't time to change to the farmer's?"

"They have only two work horses. We couldn't get fifty feet on them—those riders coming down the hill are mounted on thoroughbred riding-horses."

The conditions were desperate Jesse saw. There did not seem to be a way out. He hung his head with his hands deep in his pockets, an attitude that he usually took when he was deep in meditation. Jesse felt that he and Frank were in a perilous position. But he still trusted in finding a way out, although he confessed to himself that there was not much time to think with his enemy only a mile away and spurring

hard on thoroughbred horses. But Jesse's mind worked with lightning speed. He managed to hit upon a plan, desperate in itself but then, was not his plight, as well as his brother's desperate?

CHAPTER VII.

JESSE JAMES' PLOT.

"Get the horses off there at that clump of trees about a quarter of a mile from the house."

Jesse James gave these instructions to Frank in a quick incisive manner and Frank, who knew his brother so well, jumped without a word to follow out the order.

The horses were soon secreted in the midst of the trees so that they could not be seen from either house or road, and then Frank James hurried back to the house where he found Jesse standing beside several piles of clothing which he was examining carefully.

"What's in the wind now?" asked Frank.

Jesse did not reply. He picked out of the pile of clothing a pair of blue-jean overalls, a blue smock-frock, and a wide hat, of faded and rather dirty white.

In a second Frank had donned this regalia and looked exactly like an uncouth and grinning country-lad whose sole thought was of the farm.

Jesse managed to pick out the same style of hat, with a broad brim, and much the same style of coat and trousers, such as the substantial head of a good farm would wear when at work. Jesse found a pair of spectacles which he put on his nose and then the two bandits sallied to a pile of straw near the barn, and ten minutes later when the posse hunting them spurred into the barnyard the two men open-mouthed leaned on their forks and asked in amazed tones what the trouble was.

"Trouble, Farmer," cried the leader of the bandit-chasers, a self-sufficient young, and fat man. "We are chasing the two worst outlaws in the country."

"So?" replied Jesse in a wondering tone.

"Betcher life! Say, them fellers we're chasin' aint no other then Jesse and Frank James."

"Who be they?" asked Jesse in a wondering tone. "Don't see as them fellers lived about hyar. I don't never hear of no James'es boays about hyar."

"Nor I nuther," grunted Frank James as he stopped from pitching up some straw into a loft above his head.

"Well, whether you have seen 'em or not," cried the leader of the bandit-chasers, "they've been by here—they is the wust kinder outlaws in the country."

"I seen two fellers on hosses ride by hyar 'bout an hour ago," ejaculated Jesse as he spat on his hands and went to work at the straw.

"They's the fellers, shore," the bandit-chase leader bawled. "Which way did they go?"

"Right deoun th' road," cried Jesse. "They was a goin' lickety-split. I was thinkin' thet some o' th' neighbors was a sendin' fer the doctor—so they was outlaws, hum? Wall, Wall!"

As if his remark had ended his interest in anything but the pile of straw, Jesse worked away as if his life depended upon his celerity. The posse dashed off down the road in hot search after the mythical outlaws while Jesse and Frank, the two outlaws with their hats pulled down over their faces to conceal their grins of delight, apparently unemotionally continued their work. But their hearts were exceedingly happy.

They had narrowly escaped a great danger to themselves and had thrown off of the scent men who had they discovered their identity would have killed them as they would a couple of rats.

"That was a close shave," muttered Frank.

"Yes. My heart was in my throat. I'd felt in my mind that they would get next, and I made up my mind if they did the only thing was to get in the barn and fight it out—they would probably get us sooner or later and we only would have the satisfaction of getting them before they could get us."

"Well, they didn't get us."

"Thereat we are glad."

"But it looks to me as if we were pretty well up against it?"

"Doesn't it?"

"The entire country seems to be after us."

"Right you are!"

"Anyway, there's one thing in our favor, few know us."

"Lucky for us."

"True again. I've never been down here before and you've been here only a little time once before and probably the only man that knows our faces are Maxwell Hyde and his friend—no, he don't know us at all. Maxwell is the only man on to us."

"Again lucky for us."

"Is it not?"

"Well, anyway, we are pretty well hemmed in and it's going to be hard to get out—in fact if it wasn't for giving up my entire plans I'd make a run for it right now, and try to skip this country. I can fight most any man on earth and I can give a good account of my work with two or more enemies, but I can't fight all this part of Missouri."

"That's so. They all seemed determined to 'show us' down here—well go ahead Jesse. It's up to you. You're the chap leading this forlorn hope. Just what you want to do you just do, and I'll help you out all I can. It's a getting hot for us about here I'll admit. Well, the only thing to do is to do the best we can, and that is to go right on with your plans—whatever you may want."

Jesse's eyes snapped with a baleful light. He was wondering just what it would be best to do and was angry clear through. He did not propose to relinquish his method of campaign unless he was sure that there was no chance of his carrying it through. Jesse at his home was in the habit of carefully planning out the desperate deeds of himself and his fellow outlaws. In case he went alone, the campaign was mapped out with an idea of eliminating every possible chance from the program so that the outlaw would only have to deal with cold facts; if he and Frank, or if he and others of the gang, went on a raid it was so planned to be extremely comprehensive, and to entail the least possible risk to any one, and to accomplish the greatest results in a given time. The James boys preferred the ways of robbery and blood always and they cherished a settled hatred against all organized society; and took toll from it at every chance.

In this case they were at a loss how to proceed. They had planned the campaign which was to loot the banks they had already looted, but there were other things that Jesse had planned and he feared that with the hue and cry raised against him and his brother,

with all the country in arms against him that he dared not essay further trial of his mission.

Jesse was thoroughly angry. Yet angry as he was he dared not tempt fate, and after thinking matters over for some time he decided that he had better devote himself to the work of escaping rather than to take over further exploits. It would be better to escape and come back, than to not escape and never come back.

Jesse in a few murmured words told Frank of his conclusions. Frank, who never in the slightest degree contradicted Jesse, laughed and coincided. He did not care much what he did as long as Frank lead, although he was by no means no leader himself. He could at a pinch engineer quite a desperate undertaking, and had "pulled over" some splendid criminal plans; only his habit of mind was not of the kind that looked far ahead. He preferred to have some one else lead. Jesse was not loath to assume the position of leader.

"Best thing to do is to get to our horses and get away from here post haste," added Jesse.

"Shall I go get them?" asked Frank.

"Better get them quick while I'm getting out of this rig."

As soon as the horses were got ready, and fed, and rubbed down, or in all about an hour after the outlaw-chasers had disappeared, Jesse and Frank were again in the saddle headed for some unknown point.

"Where are you going?" asked Frank.

"Back to that tavern!"

"Back to the tavern?"

"Yes."

"Aren't you sure, Jesse, that you will get in trouble?"

"I'm looking for it."

"Don't be rash!"

"I won't. But I'm weary of being chased about like a common thief. I am no second-story window man or strong-arm man in a big city. I'm only out for big game that makes a great fight. It requires no coward to train with me. These fellows hereabouts have got to be given a lesson. They seem to think it's easy sport following Jesse James about the country and that as fast as they chase so much the faster I must run."

Frank knew by the expression of Jesse's face that he had planned and thought out a desperate deed and Jesse, Frank further knew, was not easily dissuaded from anything that his mind was made up to, so Frank shrugged his shoulders and rode on behind his brother, idly wondering what was coming next.

In a short space of time the brothers halted their horses in front of the tavern where they had held up Maxwell Hyde and his companion. Jesse laughed sneeringly as he indicated the spot. Then telling Frank to remain on his horse and back him up when the "shooting came" if any came, Jesse drew his big revolver and haughtily walked into the tavern.

His ears were smitten with the sound of men singing in lusty voices. The noise came from the bar-room and when he peeped in the door he saw that the room held a dozen men all drinking at the bar and all busily engaged in talking in the high nervous manner that excited men, excited by liquor, seem to adopt in times of great public clamor. Jesse sneeringly watched the men. They were all armed of course, to

their teeth. Rifles stood stacked in corners. Every man in addition had belts about their waists sagging with revolvers and with knives. Jesse sneered again when he saw the display of deadly weapons. They could kill him in a breath he saw, in a dozen different ways, but he was still undaunted.

He carefully looked over two of his revolvers and took pains to see that each was fully loaded and in fine condition. Jesse always carried the old type of Army .45, which he used to say was the best weapon in the market for quick execution and beat the new fangled magazine revolver to death. Having assured himself that he was well armed and could depend on his weapons, Jesse opened the door to the bar-room, stepped calmly inside, with each hand bearing a revolver. The crowd sagged back as they saw a man enter with revolvers displayed in such a menacing manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESPERATE POSITION.

"Good evening, gentlemen!" Jesse James suavely remarked. "Hands up! I am Jesse James!"

For a moment absolute stillness reigned in the room. Not a man stirred. A tall man with a glass of whiskey in his hand, which at the time Jesse spoke was half way up to his mouth, stopped the operation with the whiskey still unconsumed and gasped. A second man, started to steal his hand toward his waist belt but there was an evil light in the outlaw's eyes that caused him to give up the effort. A third man looked over his shoulder at his rifle, laughed at the plight his carelessness had left him in, and shoved his hands above his head.

"Hands up!" cried the deadly, calm voice of the outlaw again. "Last call! I'll kill the man who doesn't obey."

There were one or two shrewd glances cast at the bandit when he had thus spoken for there were men in that room who were able to give fine account of themselves in the exchange of shots in a bar-room broil.

The glances told the men who were experienced in such matters that there would be no timidity in pulling the trigger of either revolver that was pointed at them by Jesse and they decided that "he who fights and runs away may live to fight another day."

As there was no opportunity to run at all the best thing to do was to remain quiet and hold up hands. The general opinion that this was so seemed to spread around the circle and reluctantly but nevertheless steadily, hands were poked high in air, even the white-aproned bar-keeper shoving his up also after one longing, lingering look at a revolver that lay temptingly near.

"Now gentlemen," mocked Jesse. "Every man fall in line back of me."

There was a shuffling of feet and the order was obeyed although a long growl ran through the men as they did so. It would hardly seem possible that one quiet outlaw could hold-up a room full of men. But it was being done and had won out because the daring deed had been carefully planned. The captured men were not ready for the arrival of the outlaw. He had caught some with weapons far away. Others had been covered by the bandit's weapon before they knew that Jesse was among them. It is always so with deeds of this caliber. The men attacked are not

warned in advance. They simply see a cool, strong, tall, broad-shouldered man walk in with two revolvers in his hands. There is the usual demand to "hold up hands" and while one brave man might have got to his weapon, it was sure that he would fall dead at a shot from the outlaw. The others while one man was being killed would have no trouble in eventually killing the bandit—but one man would have to be sacrificed and so strong is the love of life in every man that no one of the men in range of Jesse's guns wished to be the man to "make the break."

The outlaw counted on this well known fact, and here he was with a band of brave men all facing toward a blank wall and with their hands all pointed to the ceiling and all angry and all wishing they had the necessary sand to try conclusions with the calm, steady eyed outlaw.

Jesse's reputation for straight shooting and deeds of blood had gone far. He had been known to do this thing before and his prestige was of such a caliber that he had the mob before him thoroughly cowed.

"Now gentleman," Jesse's calm even tones continued! "I am going to take your valuables."

He ranged behind each man and deftly with one hand searched the pockets of the crowd. His other hand still held the unwavering weapon and he made no remark as he took a roll of bills from this man; some jewelry from that one; and from every man took his side weapons. The result was astonishing. He had enough revolvers and knives to stock a small army. But besides that he had a couple of thousand dollars in bills and gold and silver; a number of good watches, and after he had thoroughly searched his victims, rushed backward out of the place jumped on his horse and like the wind hurried off, Frank following him at the same swift pace. Jesse tossed his load of revolvers over a fence into a field because he could not be burdened with them, and well knowing that the loss of the weapons would not fail to stop pursuit until the major members of the posse he had held-up could re-arm themselves.

"That's pretty slick," cried Frank. "I made up my mind that was what you were going to do. You got away with it, Jesse, but you may not some day. That's the second time you've turned that trick. Three times and out, you know!"

"I know! I didn't want to do that, but it roiled me down to my boot-tops to know that I was being chased about like a wild-beast. I thought I'd teach that gang in that bar-room that they weren't going to do all the things that they were bawling they were going to do to Jesse James, after all."

"Well, they were only bar-room fighters at that. They were easy marks. Two or three of them would have the sand to put a fight up against you but the others would just faint away if either of us were to announce ourselves as the James boys."

"That's right! They were all hot-air-gun-fighters. Not one of them dared peep when I waltzed in—but it got some of the bile off my system."

"Yes, and it got another posse after you."

"The more the merrier! What of it? If they get us it's all over in quick time. We won't get any mercy from this gang around here and I'm not going to ask for any. I'm through now. It's back to Clay County for me. The rest of the loot that we might have got on

to won't do us any good. We are up against it hard enough now to satisfy any reasonable man."

"Do you know I learned something when I was awaiting you?"

"What was it?"

"I heard a fellow who went walking by say that they had us penned in."

"Penned in? How?"

"He said that there was at least five hundred men after us. The plan of the people out here is to draw a cordon around us so that we will be surrounded by posses."

"Oh!"

"We are to be made the center of a circle and this circle will constantly be narrowed into a smaller one until we are chased into smaller and smaller quarters."

"I understand."

"How do you think the last dash is to be made?"

"I don't know."

"Twenty-five men under Maxwell Hyde are to try and catch us in the center of the circle. We are to be shot-up by them. If we escape——"

"Oh, they really think there is a possibility of our escape?"

"That was what I overheard. If we escape they figure that those guarding the outside circle will get us."

Here was a condition the most dangerous the two men of blood and dire deeds had ever faced. It began to seem to Jesse that they had overstayed their time. They ought to have escaped when the organization had not crystalized itself. Jesse knew that Maxwell Hyde was a born leader and was a brave man. They could see his genius for organization in the plan that had been made. It was the only plan possible to aid in the capture or deaths of the two outlaws and now that they had raised such strong opposition, Jesse's face was very grave. He saw that his chances for escape were not many. He felt that he might have made a grave error in trying to get even with the gang of men in the bar-room but he knew that it was now too late for repentance.

"Anyway," snapped Jesse, "we have done all we set out to do. I think that we have secured a good big boodle. How much have we raised this trip?"

"All told about fifty thousand dollars. That's not so bad——"

"Not so bad if we get away with it. If these people catch us the money won't be much good to us."

Jesse pulled his horse to a walk, and then hurriedly thought over possible plans for escape. Turn which way he would there seemed to be nothing that in any way could aid him. To keep to the highways meant certain capture. He did not know enough of the cross-country conditions to risk a dash and his horse and that of Frank's was showing signs of sheer distress. The beasts after all were only farm-horses and, while they had been saddle-broken, were in no way as good as their own horses, and here they were far from refuge, alone in a strange country surrounded by desperate men sworn to kill them and once and for all end the domination of the James boys which had been a terror of the time all over the middle-West and the South-West. But Jesse tried hard to keep his spirits up. Frank saw for the first time indecision rest on the brow of his brother and he too now felt a strange qualm pass over him. No man, outlaw or

not, likes to face death without a struggle, and Frank could not help confessing to himself that there was danger of defeat and death in the air about him.

The two men sat their horses hardly knowing which way to turn. They were afraid almost to venture in any direction. For the first time in their long careers of crime they were facing what had made them so successful—organization.

While their horses pawed the earth and whinnied to each other, Jesse with a somber face gazed at his brother, who equally puzzled and wondering gazed speechless back at him.

Their dilemma was solved, however, by a circumstance that was beyond them and which gave them when they saw it presented to them renewed courage.

From the thicket of bushes that lined the road there came a low whistle, Jesse's hand stole to his ready revolver. Frank drew his weapon ready to use it in a moment.

"Don't shoot!" cried a thin, high, piping voice. "It's I—Dwarf Hank!"

The speaking of the words was followed by the appearance in the midst of a canopy of green leaves of the elf-like face of the tiny misshapen man, whose cavern-home they had left only a few days before. The dwarf was grinning in glee, while his great black eyes were snapping with excitement and his long hair was being blown hither and thither in the soft breeze.

"Hello, Hank!" smiled Jesse.

"Hello, sport!" echoed Frank.

Grinning wider than ever the dwarf jumped through the thicket and hobbled with great swiftness toward the two beleaguered outlaws. He sat down on a stump and while his eyes twinkled maliciously looking first at one of the brothers and then at the other.

"Jest thought I'd warn ye," he croaked. "There's a posse down the road a bit waiting fer ye. They allow you'll come along this road."

"How about going back the way we came?" sourly asked Jesse.

"There's ten men there waitin' fer ye. Maxwell Hyde has them. He says he's going ter kill ye both on sight."

Jesse instinctively looked toward the left across the wide expanse of green fields.

"No use that way—lot of men there waitin' fer ye," remarked the dwarf.

Frank's eyes gazed to the right. The dwarf smiled again.

"Can't git off that way," he added. "More men there. In fact you two boys are hemmed in!"

Jesse swore roundly. He saw that he was trapped and that there was without doubt men in every direction bound to capture him. His heart almost stood still because he tasted in advance the bitterness of defeat and knew that as matters now stood if he could not find some way out his capture was certain. He knew that the dead cashier of the Milton bank was popular throughout the entire country about him. The dead man's brother was urging the men who were hunting for him to deeds of courage that they possibly would not have assayed if it had not been for the encouragement of Fred Felton, and the leadership of Maxwell Hyde.

"In a tight hole, aren't ye?" said the dwarf, who had been watching both men carefully.

"Looks that way," replied Jesse dejectedly.

The dwarf took an easier position on the log and then squared himself for further remarks.

"I say, how much is it wuth t' ye to have a way out shown you?"

The words came as balm to the two distracted outlaws. They looked hopefully at the dwarf who appreciated the sensation his words had made to the fullest. He knew that he had the attention of the two outlaws and was bright enough to see that he had the matter in his own hands. He now wanted the price set and if it was high enough showed his willingness to help in the possible escape of the two brothers.

"How much do you want to get us free?" asked Jesse, who watched the dwarf carefully.

"Is ten thousand dollars too much?" the tiny man asked. "I can't promise sure to git ye off but I am pretty well acquainted with this country and I will try fer that sum. It's a case of pay and play but nothing sure promised."

"What d'ye say, Frank?" asked Jesse.

"Beggars can't be choosers," replied Frank. "This fellow is our last look in. We don't know this country over well. Everyone seems to be after us. There isn't a show for us as we stand. Seems to me I'd take the only chance we have and go over with the cash. If this fellow can't save us we can't save our lives, and that money ain't going to do us any good if we are caught—I'd take a chance and put up the bank-roll."

"I look at it that way myself," Jesse answered. He took from his pocket a big roll of bills and counted out in bank-notes of large denomination the money asked by the dwarf. He handed the creature the cash and it was clutched in a neat brown claw-like fist and hidden away in the twinkling of an eye.

"Leave your horses," the dwarf cried. "They ain't no good any more."

The outlaws obeyed and Dwarf Hank led the way down through the thicket of brush toward the Missouri River bottom which could be seen shining not more than a mile away. The way was not hard to negotiate. There was increasing shrubbery which began to grow taller and taller and the three men pushed along at a good pace. The tiny dwarf made it easy for himself by dodging under trees that the taller and broader shouldered outlaws had to go around, and soon the three stood by the river on a shelving bank and were cautioned not to move by the dwarf who disappeared in the tall, rank grass, and presently nothing could be heard of him.

"Do you suppose this is a plant?" asked Frank.

"Hard to tell," replied Jesse. "Whatever it is it's all the string we have left to us. If Dwarf Hank throws us down there's only a squeak left for us. We will have to try and cut our way through the lines that are hemming us in. It's not one chance in fifty that we can break through, but we might do it by a sudden dash. We could stalk the enemy, creep through and maybe get off—but it's such a small chance that I don't want to attempt it unless this fellow surely throws us."

"He has the cash. Why should he come back?" remarked Frank. "Maybe we ought not to have given him that stuff so brash."

"I don't know. You can hindsee, you know, better

than you can foresee. As it is, why, we must stand here and await his return—there he is, coming back in a boat."

Dwarf Hank was to be seen now in a flat-bottomed row-boat coming along close to the shore with all his force bent on the oars. He made the boat fly through the water in an astonishing manner for his tiny form. But like many men who are distorted from birth he was strong, and as he and the skiff in which he was seated were both light, he made splendid progress and soon grounded the skiff at the feet of the two outlaws.

"Gettin' anxious, were ye?" he snickered as he beckoned to the two men. "Kinder thinkin' how you mount hev held on ter th' cash longer an' not run no risk o' my not comin' back. Why, say, if I'd wanted ter throw ye, I could have got ye down here, turned some of my boys loose on ye, and got yer whole bundle. But you chaps trusted me an' I ain't goin' ter throw ye. Don't git worried. I'm goin' ter save ye ef I kin—an' I think I kin."

With these encouraging words the dwarf motioned the two men in the boat. He stationed Jesse in the bow, while he told Frank to take the seat aft and to hang on to a paddle with which the craft was to be steered when more than one person was in it.

"This boat ain't no great shakes ter look at," the dwarf remarked as he gave way at the oars. "But she'll carry us safely a spell. Then we will git to the shore."

As soon as the boat rounded a bend in the turgid Missouri River, Dwarf Hank instructed Frank to steer close to the shore. He said that in shore with the fringe of trees and shrubbery as a background the boat was less liable to be seen than if the river was breasted further out. At this point he explained, the river was about a mile wide. It was tortuous, and was twisting as it had a habit of doing, and there was scant danger that any one of those searching for the outlaws would come to the river side because after the hold-up in the old tavern, it had been known that the men had horses, and therefore it was surmised that they would try to escape along some high road. The plans had left the river out entirely. The enemy seemed not to think it possible for the outlaws to dare a river attempt, and Dwarf Hank explained that he had his spies out who were watching the operations of the men trying to capture his friends.

"I've been attendin' t' some outlaw work hereabouts myself," remarked Dwarf Hank with some pride. "In fact I ain't so pop'lar about hyar that ye could notice it wit th' naked eye. They's fellers in thet posse over thar would try hard t' git me ef they could. I knows this an' I ain't turnin' this trick fer ye boys quite as hard on yer account ez I'm doin' it ter git even wit some o' them smarty-elicks in th' various posses. In fac' one o' them gangs, although they don't know it, are pretty well filled up wit me own men. These fellers see ter it thet I gits first-hand knowledge o' all that's goin' ter come off. That's how I knew where th' men was posted."

"Oh, I see," replied Jesse. "You had your spies tell you of the plans of the men who are chasing us?"

"Rawther."

"Then did you come after us?"

"I kinder smelled ye. I figgered thet ye would hev ter come outen about hyar. Thar want no other road

thet would take ye any whar else arter Jesse here held up them men in the bar-room—say, that was a brash bit o' work! The fellers were hoppin mad wen they woke up that Jesse James hed held up a band o' 'em an' as soon as they gets hosses and weapons they started hue and cry arter ye—holy smoke boys, ye outer seen them fellers ride arter ye, an' they went inter the wrong road o' course, an' they comes back ter the tavern ter git more booze and what they said they was goin' to do ter ye would stop a clock! An' what they did was ter talk a heap an' git boilin' full o' booze—say. Hee! Hee! But it was sartin funny!"

"Where were you when the posse returned to the tavern?" questioned Jesse.

"Layin' in th' bushes. I heern everything thet was said. Then I jest hot-footed it ter whar I knew ye'd come out sooner or later and held ye up fer that cash. Hee! Hee! Fust time th' James boys were ever helt up without no gun and made ter stand and deliver like us common-folks that hez fallen inter their clutches in th' past."

In spite of themselves the two outlaws laughed. They saw that the kind of a joke that the dwarf appreciated best was being given them here and they ruefully laughed, although they could not but admit that the wiry atom pulling at the oars had scored a good point. He had their money and they had only trust in him so far as their portion. But after all there was something about the little man that made them feel renewed confidence.

"What's to hinder my putting a bullet through your head, and taking back the money I gave you, and then rowing to safety myself?" asked Jesse.

"Nothing in the world so far as the bullet is concerned," merrily replied the dwarf. "But everything when ye come t' think that the Missouri ain't no mill-pond and ye don't know which way ter turn wit out me and wouldn't last ten minutes arter ye'd sunk me in th' river—what's ten thou' ter yer lives, boys? Ye didn't hev ter work ter git thet cash. It don't represent no labor ter ye, and I ain't a bit scart at ye—ye are not dumb-fools enough ter kill th' feller that's ginnin' ye safety an' another try at yer biz—but, boys, let me tell ye one thing. Ye ain't goin' ter last at the gait yer goin'. They ain't no country big enough to holt ye. Ye are playin' this outlaw game too strong. Put it over easier or some day some one will be givin' rewards ter hev ye kilt er captured. Relationship, friends, infloence, nuttin' stan's in th' way wen ye fellers git prices onto yer heads. Some one's goin' ter git th' reward fer popin' ye wen ye least expect et."

The dwarf relapsed into silence after this last remark and bent his energies to sending the boat along at a fine pace under its heavy load. The outlaws kept their thoughts to themselves and they were gloomy ones. They knew that Dwarf Hank was talking sound sense but they were not gifted with much introspection qualities, and they managed to collect themselves and look more hopefully on their future in spite of the depressing words of advice that had been showered upon them.

For half an hour no word was spoken. Dwarf Hank rowed hard all this time, and by and bye he slackened his pace and let the boat float gently to the shore. He explained that it might be wise for the James boys to have their revolvers in readiness but he countermanded this order a moment later as a man stepped forward

from a shading tree and whistled once in a shrill high key.

It was without doubt a signal and Hank then gave the oars two or three quick flutters through the water and the craft gently ran high up on a shelving, firm sandy beach. Jesse looked about him. The place was lonely and wild. The river ran here in a wide bend and there was quite a clump of trees about and there was further much sheltering shrubbery. Jesse noticed that having given the signal whistle the man who had been seen a moment disappeared, and he could not help complimenting the dwarf in his own mind, for not allowing any of his friends who were assisting him to be seen so that in case anything went wrong later there would be no possibility of identification. Soon the entire party were ashore. Although the sun was shining brightly and birds were singing in the trees, no sooner had the river been left behind as the three men hurried inland, than it seemed as if night had settled down so deep was the leafy shield about them on all sides. It was evident that a party of men either inland or on the river could never penetrate behind this leafy canopy, and Jesse's heart beat faster as he saw that for the present he and Frank were safe. There was absolutely no danger of a surprise from any point.

So far the dwarf had kept his promise. He had taken the two outlaws away from their dangerous proximity to the various posses scouring the country for them, but whether he would be enabled to get the outlaws away out of the danger zone without much trouble was something that Jesse knew, must be left to time alone.

"Well, we could hide here indefinitely," murmured Frank. "No one would ever find us."

"That's true," whispered Jesse in return, "but as for me I'd rather get away and do it quick than remain here much longer. I appreciate the fact that we have only this dwarf to depend on for our lives. Can he help us out of our hole?"

CHAPTER IX.

MAXWELL HYDE TAKES ACTION.

Dispirited beyond measure, but as determined as ever to arrest the notorious and criminal James boys, Maxwell Hyde sat in a room in a farm house not far from the place where the men he was searching for were trying to avoid him.

His face was drawn with the exertion of the past few weeks for he had been almost constantly in the saddle and had indeed tried hard to arrest his prey. Had it not been for the adroitness of the outlaws, he would have been successful for his plans were well laid and nine times out of ten victory would have perched upon his banners. Maxwell Hyde, while dispirited, was not crushed. He had a vast amount of reserve force and a bull-dog tenacity of purpose. He felt that the issue between himself and the two outlaws had narrowed sharply, and that in the next few days the credit for catching the bank-robbers and murderers was to be his, or they were to see victory perch upon their banners.

The news of the looting of the two banks, which, while in a measure part of each other, yet in a way were wholly separate, had been spread wide-cast. Missouri was flaming with the deed. Newspapers were calling upon the State authorities to rise and crush

the James boys. The Western and South-Western Bankers Guild had been sending frantic messages to Maxwell Hyde asking him to take some action and he felt now that the eyes of the decent world of Missouri were upon him.

"I don't care how long it takes. I don't care how many years I may waste," Maxwell Hyde muttered to himself. "I'm going to get the James boys and break up their gang. Or I'm going six-foot under the turf!"

When a man of the caliber of Maxwell Hyde makes such a statement it means only one thing, and that is that he or the outlaws will have to be buried, or, so far as the outlaws are concerned, if they are not buried they are in jail.

There was determination in the face of Maxwell Hyde as he sat and talked over matters with his companion Fred Felton. Felton was no less determined but at the same time not hopeful of success. He had begun to feel that chasing the outlaws was not to end in success. But he still hoped for the best.

"I have about given up the idea that the posses are going to do anything in the way of arresting Jesse and Frank James," remarked Maxwell Hyde. "The plan looked good to me but when I got into it, it somehow did not work. The two criminals have been chased before, you know, and they were a wily pair."

"The chain you drew about certain parts of the country where you were sure the criminals were hidden does seem unproductive. There has not been the slightest sign of the James boys has there?"

"Not the slightest! They seem to have faded away."

"Do you think they are in this country?"

"Yes. I figure that they have not left our vicinity."

"I hardly understand how you reason that out."

"It is like this. Had the James boys escaped there would have been by this time news of some kind of an attack somewhere or other; another bank somewhere would have been looted or another hold-up carried through or attempted. Those boys are not able to withstand anything long that has in it criminal loot. You may rest assured that they can't keep down long. They will be in the game soon, and if they had escaped they would have been at their old tricks a long while ago."

Fred Felton felt that Maxwell Hyde was right. He had a great respect for the elder man's judgment and knew well of his bravery, and it was with some curiosity that he awaited further information from his leader.

Maxwell Hyde picked up a small stick on the floor of the room, opened his pocket-knife and began whittling in true Yankee manner. Somehow he seemed to think clearer when thus engaged. He had turned over in his mind every possible side of the grave question before him, and he was certain in his own mind that the James boys had not escaped through the cordon that he had placed about them.

That being determined the next situation facing him was what was he to do about it? Where could he search for the two criminals? That they were in hiding in the immediate vicinity was in his mind sure—but where? How could they have escaped the cordon about them? Only by hiding. That was self-evident. But where were they hiding? How could they be secreted? And by whom?

For the purpose of eliminating all possible paths that might lead to the criminals, unless sure that the

criminals were not at the end of them, Maxwell Hyde turned to young Felton, as he knew that Felton had lived all his life in Milton, the trading center of the country and from his murdered brother's affiliation with the Milton bank, was in touch with every one within a hundred mile circle from the town.

"Look here, Felton," Maxwell Hyde began, "you know this country pretty well, don't you?"

"I ought to. I was born here and never have been ten miles from here in my life—I'm now thirty years old."

"Were you employed in your brother's bank?"

"Off and on. My brother and one other man owned the bank. They gave most of their time to it and when there was a rush about crop-moving time I used to be called in to work in the bank for a spell."

"Then you know from that fact nearly every one about here?"

"Oh, certainly!"

Maxwell Hyde leaned forward in his chair and stopped whittling. He threw away his stick and fixed his piercing eyes on Felton.

"Now, Fred," he said, "is there any one about here that you would think capable of harboring the James boys?"

It was a serious question. To answer it would probably throw suspicion upon this or that one. The suspicion would be followed by some action on the part of Maxwell Hyde. In a country where lives were snuffed out quickly and use of deadly weapons the usual argument advanced, Felton felt that he must be careful and not answer unless he told all he knew.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Hyde," Felton remarked, "there's no end of people every where in Missouri who are friends of the James boys in one way or another. The boys are a dangerous pair. It's easier to be friendly with them than to risk gaining their enmity. The authorities out here act rather slow. The James boys act rather sudden. So many stand to help the James boys covertly through fear. Just who these people are I can't say. That is why I can't tell who might aid the boys this trip, by concealing them from you until the hue and cry is over and they can get off outside this country, safe and alive."

Maxwell Hyde speculated over this answer in silence. He saw that there would be no lead up this path. For, if the James boys just rode up to an isolated farm-house and asked for shelter and concealment, policy and personal safety might actuate even one who hated the boys and their deeds, to aid in sheltering them. But at the same time Maxwell Hyde had another idea in his mind. He shot it at Felton immediately.

"Tell me then," he said, "do you know of any man out here who would be liable to aid Jesse who is in the criminal, or partly criminal class?"

"Oh, yes," returned Felton. "I know a chap called Dwarf Hank, who would help his father murder his mother if there was enough money in it for him."

"That's better!" cried Maxwell Hyde in a joyful tone. "We are beginning to get something now."

"This fellow is an awful type of dwarf. He is about thirty years old now. He came from I don't know where, and lives the life of a partial outlaw in the woods, or the bottom-lands of the Missouri River in the summer, and in the fall has a shack near the town of Milton. We all take him here as a sort of crook,

who deals in stolen goods—this part of the world is filled with petty thieves. There's a *League of Fur-Stealers* up in the North-West, who are also smugglers. They send their stuff all over the world to be traded out, sold, or smuggled, and in Missouri this chap, Dwarf Hank, whom we have dubbed here, *The Hermit Bandit* seems to act for the league, hereabouts. If he has fallen in with the James boys, he has secreted them."

Maxwell Hyde danced a sort of impromptu jig in his joy. He felt sure he had struck a path that would lead somewhere. Here was the thread he was going to follow.

"Where does this fellow Dutch Hank, didn't you say, live?"

"His name isn't Dutch Hank, it's Dwarf Hank. He lives—oh, no one knows. He seems to have a half dozen fellows in a sort of gang about him, and they train together. If we were to search the bottom-lands of the old Missouri about here I would not be a bit surprised if you would find Dwarf Hank, and possibly the James boys."

"Guess we two will take this on?"

"Better not."

"Well, I'll take five or six of the other boys and see what they can do to help out. It's not an easy thing to catch the James boys napping. They know we are after them and that we mean business, and they aren't going to take chances, but will be pretty well shielded by the gang of Dwarf Hank, if they are with him. Anyway, it will be a good idea taking along some of the extra men—will you see that some of the men among the posses that you know well are selected? Don't get any one that isn't all right, willing to fight and will keep his mouth shut afterward."

Felton nodded with a smiling face. He remarked that he knew the boys that would help in case of need, and would take care and get responsible ones that could be depended upon. The gravity of the danger they were going to face appealed to Felton and he left Maxwell Hyde to make the necessary arrangements and to try and discover just where the men were located that they were after.

Felton found after some search one man, Big Ed Gray, who told him some valuable things. Firstly, this man said, that the haunts of Dwarf Hank had always been supposed to be within a certain district, not far away from the point where they were talking; and it was decided that as soon as night came the entire party would start on the quest for the James boys, led by Maxwell Hyde. A meeting-place was arranged for about a mile from the farm-house, and as soon as the land was shaded in darkness the intrepid band started forth on their dangerous mission.

CHAPTER X.

A FIGHT FOR LIFE.

Jesse James and his brother Frank, had not long to await the plans of Dwarf Hank. The misshapen fellow led them up a steep incline and then turned back upon his steps until he had come to a steep rocky cliff. The cliff was segregated from the bottom-land of the river by a canyon.

The party stumbled along this canyon, while Jesse gazed up at the steep walls of the cliff that towered above them several hundred feet high. It was an eerie view the outlaw band had from the bottom of the steep. The walls seemed to cleave a bit of sun-

light out of the sky and frowned upon it. There was a colony of hawks whirling about the sides of the cliff and about two-thirds of the way up there was to be seen a tree which jutted out from the rocks. A tiny rope led from this tree down to where the outlaws were standing, and without ceremony Dwarf Hank grasped this rope and gave a stout pull.

"Stand back, boys," the dwarf murmured. "Don't get hit!"

His words were followed by the fall of a large package of something, and the outlaws dodged back. Dwarf Hank paid no attention to the outlaws but instead jumped upon the package and with his claw-like hands managed to open it with ease and with deftness born without doubt of long practice.

A rope ladder was disclosed to his view. It was arranged upon pulleys so that all that had to be done was to pull at the rope and the ladder soon soared into position. It looked very frail against the walls of the beetling cliff, but without a word, save a nod and a curt glance upward, the dwarf clutched his rope in his skinny hands and swarmed up it like a sailor at sea.

Jesse watched him open-mouthed, Frank was equally amazed. The tiny form looked like a sprawling fly displayed as it was against the reddish-rocky earth of the cliff. But without looking down the dwarf reached the point where the tree grew out of the side of the cliff, hurdled over it, and then looked down at the wondering outlaws, and shrilly called down to them to follow him up the ladder.

Jesse gingerly felt of the rope. It seemed small and frail to him, and he wondered if it would take his heavy bulk up into the heights above. Frank steadied the rope as well as he could and after a time Jesse, awkwardly began the ascent. His form swayed in the wind as the ladder was surmounted, and once or twice when he looked down and saw Frank far below him he was sick at heart and nearly ended his career of crime by dropping backward into the abyss. But he heartened up a little after a time and managed to stand still long enough not to feel that he was bound to pitch to death.

In a short time of climbing Jesse managed to reach the tree, tumbled over it, perspiring and breathless, and finally sat down in a dim place hollowed out in the rocks and awaited the arrival of his brother.

Frank for his part shut both eyes and climbed. This method of procedure got him to the top of the ladder without many of the qualms that Jesse had experienced.

"I'm here for life," he remarked to Jesse. "If there's no other way out of this place I'm stranded forever. I'd never get sand enough to go down to the end of that rope-thing, even if I did shut my eyes and shin up it."

Jesse smothered his laughter. He did not know what to do save to hope himself that there was another way out, and when the question of exit was put to the dwarf he only winked and remarked that the only way out was the way they had come in.

"What is this place?" asked Jesse.

"It's the last stand of Hank," the dwarf cried. "I know that some day people about here will be hunting for me. I'm young to die. So, in the several hiding places that I have made for myself in this vicinity so that the hue and cry which is bound to come for me

will not find me, in that place. It was some years backth' place whar they was a lot of hawks thet built nests in th' side o' th' clift. I gets me a rope, an' I gets up hyar—then I fixes up this hyar rope-ladder game—here, we are snug as we kin be an' ef theys any fellers thet try ter git up hyar—well, you jest wait!"

As he spoke the dwarf pulled the rope up and soon snugly stowed away the ladder. Then he threw the tiny rope out and turning led the way back into a small cavern.

Jesse looked about him in some surprise. The cavern was fitted up like the one he had first been taken to by the dwarf. It was all very comfortable and very out of the way, and Jesse felt sure that he and Frank could remain hidden there for years—but then there was Maxwell Hyde! The feeling about this man was mixed in Jesse's mind. He appreciated that a detective was not to be very much feared by him. No detective could solve the labyrinths of the outlaw mind, Jesse felt sure, but here was a man almost an outlaw himself, and he knew tricks himself. But then, the outlaw went on in his speculations, how could Maxwell Hyde ever find the rope ladder, how steal up the heights to this concealed nook? Impossible!

So while their host went to work preparing a meal, the outlaw brothers sat down together and began talking over their future. They concluded that it was a black one. As long as they were where they were, safety was probably theirs. If they started away from the dwarf they did not know how long before they would be captured.

"The thing I'm afraid of," remarked Frank, "is that his dwarf will lay for our bank roll."

"U-m-m," replied Jesse.

"He could hold us up for any sum he wanted to and make us put up on a threat that he would squeal. Don't you see?"

"Yes, I see. I also can drop him off the ledge there several hundred feet down into that canyon. He wouldn't make much more than a fly speck when he hit the earth, I'll admit, but it would pay me to see him tumble if he tried that trick of holding us up—don't let that get in your noddle. He won't hold us up, you can rest assured a little bit!"

"I'm glad to hear it. That idea being out of my noddle what's the game for us now?"

"You may search me! How do I know? What can I do? I'm stumped! I'm just going to drift a bit and let it go at that. There's nothing to do now but wait. I haven't a plan yet but to wait and see where we are at. We can't get through this game by fighting through. If we get off at all it will be due to the dwarf and to him alone—so let's get some supper!"

During supper there was not much conversation. The situation was felt to be serious. No one was in the mood for talk in any way. Jesse was moody and Frank was equally non-communicative. So the meal passed and the dwarf finally, after a smoke, decided to go to bed while his two companions after a time followed him.

Their slumbers began about the time that Maxwell Hyde and his party started away from the point where they had met for the farm-house. They were not a merry party. All appreciated that the hunting down of the two outlaws was a dangerous undertaking. But Maxwell Hyde who led them was sure that he had

a clue to the whereabouts of the James boys, and he did not say much to the others in the party, but he led the march directly to the bottom-land of the Missouri River.

Beside Maxwell Hyde marched Fred Felton all the remainder of the party of eight coming on in straggling order behind these two men. The night was dark but there was enough radiance from the stars to give an opportunity to the men to pick their way along the tortuous way and in a few moments they were standing beneath the tree where only a few hours before the two outlaws had awaited the return of Dwarf Hank.

"Have you any information as to where the outlaws are?" questioned Fred in an undertone when he had drawn Maxwell Hyde one side out of ear shot.

"A strange thing happened to me after you left," was the reply. "I was studying out the situation and I heard some one asking for me down stairs. I went down and was met by a slight tiny figure, all muffled to the eyes in a shawl. I don't know who the person was that had called but he thrust into my hands a written missive and in it I later found, some information that led me to think that the outlaws were in the vicinity."

"I understand," replied Felton. "There were some reasons then for your coming here."

"This is the only reason I have. It is all I have. I don't know whether the information is correct or why it was given to me."

"It looks to me as if some one knew where the outlaws were and had a grudge against them and gave you the information you are now possessed of to have you come and surprise the bandits."

"You never can tell. That is the way I construed it, but the other horn to our dilemma is this—are we being led into an ambush?"

Felton's spine grew cold. The thought was not a pleasant one. Any moment if this idea was right a storm of shot might spring out from any thicket and end his life and that of his companion.

"W-e-l-l-l," he faltered. "I don't know what to think?"

"Nor do I! If it's a plot to exterminate us we may expect to be killed any second. If it is not a plot but the information is true we may surprise the outlaws. So far as I am concerned there was nothing for me to do but play every string no matter what might be the result. It was my duty—"

Felton interrupted. He had been thinking over the matter while his companion spoke. It seemed to him that he had a solution.

"Look here, Maxwell Hyde," he cried. "Whoever gave you that information gave it first hand. He knew what he was talking about. The James boys although they may have friends here apparently are feared and hated. It looks to me as if someone about here had the necessary information and dared not for the vengeance that would be visited upon them give up the facts. But they could come secretly to you and tell you, disguised so that you were unable, even if you would, to identify them after. They would thus get rid of the James boys secretly, and in case you failed no one would be the wiser, and you could not tell where you got the information."

Maxwell Hyde had been listening to the young man with a grim smile. He had reached this same con-

clusion in his own mind, and was glad that another man traveling along the same logical line of thought had reached the same point.

"Well, we shall see," remarked Maxwell Hyde. "Later we will probably know whether we are right or wrong—now let me see. I am instructed to take a boat here. I had arranged to have two here at this point. They were to be hidden in the shrubs along the river bank at the up-stream side of the big tree here."

Maxwell Hyde for some time searched about in the underbrush. At length he gave a low cry. He had found the hiding place of the boats and in a few more moments the entire party had embarked. Maxwell Hyde took the oars in his strong, brawny hands and sent the boat forward with long even strokes. The other boat followed him noiselessly. The darkness of the night made the scene one of stealth and secrecy. There was hardly a ripple on the surface of the river. The Missouri flowed onward in its stately way. Water rats came out from patches of weeds, blinked at the uncouth shape made by the boat, and flopped into the water in terror. Night birds were awakened. They screamed in awe of the strangers, made short rushes in the air with their flapping wings and then sank back to their nests. All was mystery and solitude and the two boats were as still as if they had been painted upon the river which itself was only the river of a picture.

Maxwell Hyde was careful to dip his oars deep, to take each stroke with a clean sweep so that no gurgling of water would betray to any watcher on the river side that boats were passing. These tactics turned the two crafts into great hideous bulks of phantom things, slowly, at times, swiftly at others hurrying with the river itself along in the darkness of the night.

Not a word was spoken on either boat from the moment the trip had been taken. This had been the strict injunction of Maxwell Hyde to every one of his men. It was carried out to the letter and so in a short time the two boats gently shivered upon the shore.

Silently Maxwell Hyde left the boat and all the others of the party as carefully followed. In a few moments the men were ranged in single file on the shore. The boats were then left in charge of one armed man with instructions to shoot any one without asking questions who did not give the countersign "Forward," and following his secret directions Maxwell Hyde led the party directly through the same route that Dwarf Hank had led the two outlaws a few hours before.

The way into the canyon's depth was followed without trouble by all. As they were stumbling along Fred Felton felt something hard and smooth strike his face. At first he thought it was a snake. He jumped back in alarm but when he looked up carefully he saw above him, on the face of the cliff a thin, darkish line, that even in the murk of the night seemed to stand out as if asking that someone solve the reason for its being there.

The black line swayed back and forth gently under the night wind and Maxwell Hyde, warned by Felton's pressure on his arm that some discovery had been made, quickly placed his hand upon the line, and of course discovered that he had hold of a tiny rope. At first Maxwell Hyde did not know what to do. In a

flash the thought of treachery came to him. But in the next breath he dismissed this feeling from his mind and gave the rope a gentle pull. There fell at his feet directly, the rope-ladder that had in the same manner fallen at the feet of Dwarf Hank.

Maxwell Hyde picked up the rope and quickly saw that it was a rope-ladder that was attached to its end. He debated in his mind what to do and coming to no conclusion held a whispered consultation with Fred Felton.

"Where did that rope-ladder come from?" asked Felton quickly, as soon as he had the facts of their find straight in his mind.

"I don't know," replied Maxwell Hyde. "It leads up somewhere. I don't know where."

"What do you propose to do with our discovery?"

"I'm going up the ladder."

"Phew! That might mean death to you."

"It's all there's left to do. I'd go if old King Death stood on the top round of the ladder awaiting me!"

"I'll stand for a bout with old King Death. But I am not looking for one with either Jesse or Frank James."

"Well, the result would be the same."

"Probably it would. But don't you think it foolhardy to go up that ladder?"

"Of course it is! I know it's the act of a fool to ascend it—but I'm going up, you can bet your bottom dollar!"

"If you do, I'm going also."

"Very good! Since we are both in this affair we might as well go to the bye-bye land together—if we go at all."

"What are you going to do with the others?"

"My plan is for we two to go up the entire distance. Big Ed Gray can then go up ten feet or so. The others of the party can hold the rope—it might be well for one or two to ascend it a little ways. Then when I yell all had better swarm up it like mad and get into the fight if there's any one left to fight with up there—"

"Or there's any one left to fight with at all."

"That's right!"

The plan of campaign was related slowly in whispers to the others in the party.

They fully understood it. Then Maxwell Hyde placed his keen Bowie knife between his lips, clenched his teeth and started up the ladder closely followed up the swaying stairway by Felton. No sooner had they reached the first twenty-five feet than Big Ed Gray hurried up to his post and all on the ground watched with beating hearts the two men as they swung high in air in their perilous ascent.

Not a sound was made by any of the party. Maxwell Hyde got up to the narrow space by the tree growing out from the side of the mountain without any trouble. He sank down exhausted and was followed by Felton who reached the top unharmed. They looked down the dizzy depth and saw that Big Ed Gray and the others were slowly climbing to their posts, and then the two undaunted men stole to one side of the tree and laid down with their weapons in their hands ready to repel any attack.

Crash! Something stirred in the gloom ahead of them.

"There's some one there," quavered Felton in a low tone.

This information was somewhat superfluous for in a wild tempest of wrath Dwarf Hank darted out from the cavern, having been awakened by the occult sense of danger that sometimes comes in one's sleep. The dwarf's voice shrieked and whistled as he plunged forward and looked over the side of the cliff. He saw the dark forms of Big Ed and his companions climbing far below him. He yelled in fear.

"Jesse! Frank!" the dwarf cried. "Treachery! We are attacked!"

Two other forms came rushing to the aid of the dwarf. The latter with fierce oaths leaned over the side of the cliff. He never dreamed that the men below him were Maxwell Hyde and his party. Instead he thought it was some of the members of the League of the Fur-Stealers attempting to surprise and rob him. The dwarf drew his knife.

"My revenge is complete! Die, you fur stealing coyotes!" shrieked the Hermit dwarf-leader, as he cut the rope ladder with his keen knife!

Maxwell Hyde with no sound rushed to the dwarf. He grasped him by the shoulders. The wiry misshapen man turned like a snake and sunk his teeth into the hands of his captor. Fred Felton turned his revolver loose and the entire party in a second was struggling for life or death in the air, on the narrow ledge.

CHAPTER XI.

INTO THE DEPTHS TO DEATH.

Maxwell Hyde gave a fierce growl as he felt the fangs of the dwarf sink into his hands. He raised himself and exerting his great strength sent the rat-like creature hurtling away from him.

Dwarf Hank gave one screech that rang over the din of the revolvers as he went flying off into the darkness down into the terrible canyon, where he fell by the side of the half sensible forms of the men who had fallen with the ladder as the dwarf cut the rope confining it. The death of the dwarf was instantaneous. His body was driven a foot into the soft sand that lined the canyon's depth, and he quivered once and lay still, while around him trickled a great stream of his life blood.

As soon as he had straightened up from his deed of strength Maxwell Hyde rushed back. The noise of the popping of revolvers had ceased. He stumbled over the form of a man. It was that of his companion, Fred Felton.

He lifted Fred's arm. Was he dead? Had he been shot? Were the charging forms that had flashed out of the cavern after the dwarf the two men, Jesse and Frank James? Expecting every moment to be shot, Maxwell Hyde lifted the prostrate and limp form of his companion and felt for his heart. Was he dead? No! Maxwell Hyde felt the faint pulsations under his hand and knew that although he might be fatally wounded Felton was not dead.

With swift yet careful steps Maxwell Hyde rushed into the gloom and soon stood half crouched, with revolver in his ready hand, in the cavern where the outlaws had secreted themselves. In the dim light of a torch stuck in a crevice of rock the brave man looked about him.

Not a soul was to be seen. He made a quick rush through the cavern. No one was there. Then he ran back to the tree. Again he saw that on the narrow

ledge no one stood, and no human being was in sight save the form of Felton who was now coming out of his insensible condition and sat up groaning and wildly gazing about.

Before he started to attend to his friend's injuries Maxwell Hyde peeped down into the depths below him. There he found a solution of his search. The trembling of a long line of rope spelled to him the manner in which he had again lost his quarry.

"By Heavens!" he groaned, "they have escaped! They slid down that rope not knowing how many men there were here in this party and caring only to get away. They dared not remain and fight it out with me—I wonder were either of the outlaws wounded?"

The remarks of Maxwell Hyde in a nut-shell told the manner in which the two outlaws had escaped him. When Dwarf Hank had cut the rope-ladder he took pains to throw over into the canyon the long, thin, but very strong rope. The James boys had seen this deed and instead of awaiting the issue of a fight had slid down the rope, taking a dashing deal with death in the effort and winning, for the rope had not parted and they were well away before the manner of their escape had been detected.

Maxwell Hyde swore roundly in his rough way at finding himself baffled again when he was so near success. But he was not the man to sink under adverse luck and the check only made him more determined than ever. He yelled down at the men below him and one of the party gave an answering hail.

"Any body killed?" bawled Maxwell Hyde.

"One man is shot. He isn't dead," came back the reply. "Two fellers came down the rope. I took a pop at them but they got me in the shoulder."

"Was any one killed when the rope was cut?"

"N-o! Big Ed's got a broken leg. We are all cut up. Did you spill some one down on top of us or did he jump off the cliff?"

"I threw that infernal dwarf down from here. Is he dead?"

"You bet! He's mashed to a jelly. One of the boys found a big roll of banknotes in his pocket. I've got it ready for you."

"All right! Some of you fellows run back to the boats. See if they are all right. Fred Felton got knocked out up here."

"Whew! Isn't killed?"

"No."

"Who were the fellers that ran by us?"

"Jesse and Frank James. They were hiding up here."

A chorus of oaths drifted back to Maxwell Hyde.

He paid no attention, however, but dragged Fred back into the cavern and then, after he had fumbled about and found some pine torches, lighted two and soon had his friend seated upon a pile of furs and began dressing his wounds. A long scalp-wound from a bullet was discovered to have been the cause of Fred's temporary cessation of hostilities.

"I fired at the two men that came dashing out of here behind that ugly little dwarf," Fred explained. "Then something hit me a thundering thwack on the head and I didn't know anything until I sat up and groaned. I guess I had a narrow escape."

"I guess you guess right," dryly replied Maxwell Hyde. "Few men are shot at by the James boys and come back to earth to talk it over. What probably saved your life was the fact that in the darkness and hurry of the surprise, one of the outlaws took a flying

shot at you and as you tumbled they were of the opinion that you had got your death wound. Then, not knowing how many of us were up here, they slid down the rope to safety. It looks to me as if they had been primed by that sneaking dwarf to come up here, and in case of a surprise to take the action they have done. Say, the brute has bitten my hands pretty deep. I flung him to the death he richly merited!"

Felton shuddered at the picture his mind again called forth of the body of the dwarf going screaming to death into the horrible depths of the canyon. He was thankful for his escape and felt grateful when after a time Maxwell Hyde hunted about and found some old linen which he cut into strips and bound up the head of his companion.

"How are we going to get down from here?" asked Fred at length.

"Oh, that's not so hard. There's no use just now of trying to find the escaped outlaws. In the night time they probably have rushed over some path that they know of and that we don't, and we probably never will find. But they are not out of the country or away from me by any means yet. There's the cordon of men that may yet catch them. They have no horses, and are without food and it looks to me as if we may get them yet. At all events I'm not going to give up. If at first you don't succeed——"

"Why try, try again," added Felton with a wan smile.

Maxwell Hyde glanced around the place and saw that there was some food still standing on a table consisting of two boards propped up by two tree stumps. Remarking that in all probability the food wasn't drugged and, anyway he was hungry enough to take a chance, Maxwell Hyde sat down and as if his campaign had been a great success, except as it really had been a succession of failures, he made a cup of coffee in a tiny sheet iron stove near at hand, and soon began making a toothsome meal.

"Seems plenty to eat and what this—yes, plenty to drink," Maxwell Hyde cried as he filled a cup with a good modicum of French brandy that stood on the table. "Better shoot a ball into yourself from the outlaw's store. It will do you more good than the ball that the James boys tried to put into your head."

Felton, feeling faint, was willing to try the kind of a "ball" offered him and the potent stuff soon made him feel better, and after a few minutes he drew up to the table and ate sparingly but with an appreciation of the food that called forth a pleased remark from his superior officer.

"You'll make a fighting-man yet," cried Maxwell Hyde. "I like to see a fellow live on the enemy. It does my heart good to eat the stuff the enemy put up for himself. It's good business this living on the enemy's country and is good generalship."

"But where's the enemy?"

"The good Lord only knows—I don't! He made a swift exit. Anyway we can congratulate ourselves on the fact that Jesse and Frank James know that we are after them. It's getting so this part of the world isn't safe with those two sneaking rascals above ground—well, I've not had much luck in getting them yet. But 'every good dog has his day'!"

"Ours will come!"

"Sure it will! Don't you let it worry you for a minute that those fellows aren't somewhere yet on earth and don't let it get to your brain that I am not

still on their trail. I'll follow them if I have to go where they scorch."

"You won't have to go that far. You'll get them in old Missouri."

"If I don't I'll have to be shown the reason why. They are two slick outlaws, but no man is so slick that there is not somewhere or other a man living that's just as slick as they are. I'm not throwing out any idle jests but let me write it in the tablets of your memory that Maxwell Hyde is going to 'get' Jesse and Frank James before he dies. See?"

"I know its only a question of time—but how long?"

"Better hunt up a fortune-teller. I can't give you that information off the book of the future. But we'll get those outlaws yet!"

The light in the eyes of Maxwell Hyde showed Felton that here was one man who would devote his life to a search that in itself was about as dangerous as one as a man could dedicate himself to. The outlaws were desperate in the feeling that if they did not save themselves they would be captured and would go no slight lengths in their attempts to put Maxwell Hyde out of their path. Felton knew that whatever had actuated Frank and Jesse James in not taking the life of Maxwell Hyde that now, when they saw how deadly were his constant attempts to capture or kill them, that they were only safe from Maxwell Hyde's constant work to catch them in the death of the outlaw-chaser himself.

"We won't talk outlaws any more," remarked Maxwell at this point. "They are out of our clutches for a time. We will forget them and try and see what we can do toward getting out of this place."

Soon the intrepid man was howling at the top of his lungs to his men in the canyon below. They could see lights from torches moving about below them like fire-flies. The men in the canyon had repaired damages as well as they could under the circumstances and were now awaiting their leader. Maxwell Hyde after he had wrapped up a substantial lunch for his men, popped the brandy bottle into his pocket, and then telling the men below to look out hauled up the fatal rope which had so well sustained the forms of the flying outlaws and tying the rope around the waist of Felton slowly lowered him to the outstretched arms of the men below. Felton never forgot the downward trip in the long life that he led after he had stopped being an outlaw-seeker.

As soon as a yell from below appraised him of the fact that Felton was safe, Maxwell Hyde calmly slid down the rope and soon was answering the many questions of his friends. He told the story of the mid-air fight briefly and then instructed some of his men to heap stones over the body of the dead dwarf, and, after he had examined the money found on the ugly corpse, identified the cash as being part of that stolen from the Milton bank. It did not take Maxwell Hyde long to read the story told by the presence of the two outlaws in the cavern with the dwarf, coupled with the finding of ten thousand dollars of the stolen money on the body of one of the trio.

"Don't you see, boys," Maxwell murmured. "The outlaws paid that little snake of a man this money to hide them out until a chance came to escape. We have the cash in our pockets now to be returned to the bank. The dwarf is dead and I am taking odds at two to one that we catch the James boys and get the rest of the money ourselves inside of the next twenty-four hours."

"I'll take the little end of that bet," bawled Big Ed Gray from an improvised litter of tree-boughs on which he had been laid. "If I win it will pay a doctor for setting this leg. If I lose—well, it's a good bet if I do lose."

The party laughed and acting under the instructions of their leader, they retraced their steps toward the boats and soon were afloat again on their way back to their starting point. Maxwell Hyde allowed one of the other men in the boat in which he sat to do the rowing as his hand pained him grievously. But in his hour of check he did not give up hope. He was as determined as ever that he would catch the two outlaws and dead or alive take them back to Milton, where they had killed an innocent man while they were looting the bank of the money.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FLIGHT OF THE OUTLAWS.

In a hollow about a mile from the scene of their narrow escape, torn with conflicting emotions the two outlaws halted.

Jesse James sank exhausted on a log and Frank stretched himself out upon the earth, utterly spent with his exertions.

The men had made a daring escape but they had not come out of the battle unharmed. Jesse was suffering from a bullet wound through the fleshy part of his left arm, while a second bullet had made a red welt on the forehead of Frank. But in spite of their wounds they were undaunted. The two men notwithstanding their life of crime were not deficient in brute courage and they had hardly felt their wounds. Had Fred Felton known that he had picked the two criminals he would not have been feeling his own hurts so much.

Jesse after a time sat up and swore roundly. He knew that he and his brother were now worse off than ever. They had parted with a goodly lump of the proceeds of their trip but they had many thousands of dollars left yet, and Jesse's mind was firmly made up that he would part with no more money in an effort to escape. If he could not plan his way out he would back up against a wall and fight until he was killed. This he imparted to Frank in a few words. Frank was equally determined and the two men after some time for rest took up their journey.

"Do you know where we are?" asked Frank.

"Somewhere in the bottom-land of the Missouri," replied Jesse. "That's the extent of my knowledge. Where I am isn't bothering me half so much as where I am to go to."

"I'm with you there. Can't we steal horses somewhere?"

"Where?"

"At any farm-house as we did before."

"That won't go any more. We have set the country in arms against us. I'll bet there isn't a horse in four hundred rods that hasn't got a farmer setting along side of it watching it, with a gun about twenty-feet long on his knees awaiting 'them bandits.'"

"Guess you're right! It won't do for us to try and steal a horse off a farmer—but we have got to get a horse—two in fact."

"That's right! We never could escape this way. We have got to come over with a new game. They are all on to our old wrinkles."

"Trust you for thinking up something new!"

Jesse did not reply. Instead he lighted his pipe and

began smoking out the situation. It was a favorite attitude of the outlaw. He and his brother were in the center of a bit of woods securely hidden from any prying eyes, and it seemed best to stay where they were as the faint crowing of cocks in a barnyard somewhere near at hand came to their ears and there was the gray blackness in the air which showed that the morning was stealing on at speed.

"We will have to lay here awhile," Jesse remarked at length. "We can't go out into the open. We would be surrounded and shot like a couple of mad dogs before we got a hundred yards. In fact I don't see a way out yet—that I think may come. Wish I had something to eat."

"So do I. But I don't dare to cut out of here. Look! There comes the morning!"

The air was now clear of the fog that rises along the Missouri River after the sun goes down. The twitter of awakening birds, the hum of bees, the scent of wild-flowers drifted to the outlaws, but still they lay supine and fearful wondering what lucky stroke they might take that would lead them to safety. They felt each in his heart that there was not much that they could do but await developments. But when the morning had broken and it was, they thought, about seven o'clock, judging from the sun for the watches of both men in their anxiety, had been allowed to run down, Frank proposed that they reconnoiter a bit.

"My plan is to wiggle through this brush, keeping myself hidden and see if I can get my bearings."

Jesse at first was averse to prating with his brother but finally gave in and the two men separated, Frank hurrying away through the bushes like a serpent, while Jesse remained behind to solace himself with another pipe full of tobacco.

Frank to his surprise had not wiggled along five hundred feet before he came to a highway. It stretched white and glowing in the sun far away to the left and right. Frank concealed himself in the tall grass at the road side and awaited developments.

These came quickly.

He saw approaching him a wagon loaded with farm produce, and he surmised in a moment that the wagon was on its way to Milton with farm stuff aboard.

A country lad sat dozing on the seat of the wagon, the reins dangling on his horses' backs.

Frank keenly examined the horses. He saw that while they were not of the caliber used generally in Missouri for riding that at least they were young horses and would probably answer the purpose to which he proposed putting them.

Frank wiggled to a better position nearer the roadside.

Then he awaited the moment when the wagon would be opposite him. The country boy still dozed on his seat. The names of the outlaws probably were not in his mind and he had forgotten the troubles attending a weary ride to town as he sat half asleep trusting that his horses would keep to the oft trodden road without needing much guiding.

Frank stole softly behind the wagon and with a leap like that of a tiger-cat jumped to the rear part of the rig and quietly crept forward until he stood behind the half sleeping lad. Then Frank's hands closed upon the throat of the lad. There was a muffled shriek of surprise and then Frank pulled the boy backward, laid him half strangled in the bottom of his own wagon,

gagged and bound him with the speed that comes from long practice, rushed to the horses, stripped them of their harness, all save a bridle, and then tying the two brutes to the hind wheel of the wagon, ran with fleet feet to the place where he had left Jesse. He found his brother asleep. Which spoke well for the nervous system of the outlaw!

Frank shook his brother not too gently. Jesse awoke with his hand on his revolver but when he saw Frank smiled and nodded.

"Anything doing?" Jesse asked.

"You bet!" replied Frank. "I've got some horses!"

"Horses? Where did you get them?"

"Off a farmer."

"Good boy, Frank! Tell me about it."

Frank related to Jesse all that he had done and Jesse's eyes snapped with pleasure at the recital. He saw that his brother had some of the family traits of organization pretty well developed also.

"Come on then," Jesse cried. "That's the stuff! We have a look in at an escape." But his heart was heavy after all. What chance was there with so many enemies surrounding him of escaping from them? He well knew that every road somewhere or other was guarded. He knew that there was still the terrible armed circle of men around him and that go which way he might, sooner or later he was bound to meet some of his foes. That the farmer boy had passed with a wagon and horses was a stroke of luck of course. When Jesse saw the horses his heart sank further within his breast. He whistled in amaze and then burst into a jolly laugh.

"Do you call these horses?" he asked. "They aren't horses! They're crowbaits. Neither of them can go more than five or six miles an hour."

"You remind me of the nigger and the turkey on Thanksgiving eve," dryly returned Frank. "He was carrying a scrawny turkey along the street and another nigger who had no turk met him. 'Say, I'd throw dat turk way; he ain't no good,' sez the nigger with no turk. 'Beats nuffin all ter the debbil' cried the nigger with the turk."

Jesse roared. He saw the force of the story and made the pointed application quick.

"Yep," he said. "These horses 'beat nuttin all to the debbil' and they just do that and not much more."

"We can't go five or six miles an hour walking. These horses are a good deal like a dollar at a farobank. You don't know what they will lead you up against."

"That's right! Mount and ride!"

The outlaws did not even look at the farmer boy in the bottom of the wagon, and they started off, riding bare-back, and leaving the boy to his own meditations.

The youth, Tim Bennett by name, was not so much of a "farmer" as the James boys thought. He knew all about them and the hue and cry raised against them. His father was with one of the posses. A brother was with another and the only reason he was not outlaw-chasing was because of the need for some one to be left to haul the growing crops from the farm to market. Timothy Bennett, when he had been grasped by Frank James tumbled in a second as to what had befallen him. He gave himself up for lost and felt happy to think that he had been merely choked and gagged, and laid in the bottom of his father's wagon, while the outlaws stole away with the

horses, instead of being shot and killed at once, which was more of a James boys' trick than the one he had suffered the effects of. In this case, however, he did not know that the fear of making too much noise by a shot had saved his life from a bullet. Frank James had lost his Bowie knife down the rope escape he had made, and was forced from his reasons for secrecy, rather than from human motives to treat Tim as he had done.

The moment that the outlaws were off on the horses Tim Bennett got busy. His seventeen years of life on a Missouri farm had taught him something and he strained at the rope with which he had been tied with all his might. It was a rope that held the rear-board of the wagon in place, and Tim knew that it was a new rope. He knew also that new rope stretched. In a remarkably short time Tim had stretched himself out of his bonds, and had removed his gag from his mouth, and was speeding up the road in the opposite direction to the bandits at a pace hardly to be thought possible from a pair of stout legs. The sight of a running youth was the one that Maxwell Hyde saw not an hour later. The boy came flying down the hill. Maxwell who was just mounting his horse, surrounded by three of his men, and Fred Felton, all that was left of the ill fated party that hurried after Jesse and Frank James the night before, the rest being in the hospital end of the campaign, knew the moment that he saw Tim Bennett that there was news of Jesse and Frank James. Maxwell Hyde straightened up in his saddle and a gleam of pleasure crossed his face. Although defeated he was no fool. It is always far easier to escape on the part of two men than it is to capture the two on the part of many men. So Maxwell Hyde awaited with interest the tale of the running lad.

"Say, I've seen Jesse and Frank James!" panted Tim Bennett.

"Where?" snapped Maxwell Hyde.

"About an hour's run down the road," said Tim as he went on to tell his story. When he had finished, Maxwell Hyde and the posse rode away at the best speed their horses had in them. Only an hour's start, and mounted on two horses? thought Maxwell Hyde. The horses the outlaws rode could not carry them fast enough to escape the fast thoroughbreds that he and his companions were mounted upon. In the mind of Maxwell Hyde the capture of the two outlaws, Jesse and Frank James seemed certain.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF THE TANGLED SKEIN.

The outlaws perfectly unconscious that there was nearing them such active danger, jogged along in the sweet morning air, with the fall sun shining on fields that were approaching crop perfection, talking as they went of some method of escape.

"Do you know anything about this road, Frank?" asked Jesse.

"N-o-o," replied Frank. "Not to speak of. This part of the country was laid out by a cow I guess. The roads twist and twine, and diverge and mix into each other so, that when you are on one road you find yourself suddenly on another one. The entire road system in their infant days of Missouri, it seems to me, were laid out by a cow as it went grazing along."

"That's an apt illustration. But even so. The greatest labyrinth has some way out. We have got to get out this trip or get in—jail!"

"The jail that would see us isn't built. The enraged condition of the men in this country would produce a rope and a tree for each of us—say, Jesse, I'd half like to see you dancing on air!"

"Thank you but none of that for mine. I'm going to look out for myself and not get caught where I've got to dance to another fellow's music. Don't you think I'd get caught if the posses closed in on us now. I'd rather take mine from some one's gun in a fight."

"So would I—shake!"

The outlaws thus sealed a compact between them that they would never surrender but would fight to grim death's doors if the posses made this act necessary.

"Well jog that horse of yours," remarked Jesse. "Is that the best you can do to get speed out of him?"

"The best, Jesse. Say I hit him with this club and he sticks his head up and begins galloping. He goes through all the motions of going ahead faster but he's just like a rocking horse. He jumps up and down in the same place. The harder I hit him the more he jumps."

"My horse seems to take any blow I give him as a personal affront. Instead of resenting the blow or going ahead he just sinks down tamely under the insult. He wrinkles his skin and shudders a piece about a foot square and every blow I give him merely ends in his sagging back instead of going ahead."

"Well lick them all you can!"

This double-barreled advice worked fairly well. The horses, old farm "skates," managed to get better speed out of their work and after a time of jouncing the two men stopped before a sign board and debated what to do. The sign board said in black letters as it stood at a fork in the road—"Three miles to Milton; two miles to North Milton."

In spite of himself Jesse roared.

"If there's any two towns on the map that we don't want to get into it is those two," he cried. "Wouldn't it jar you to smack up agin that sign-board to find that the only places we don't want to get to are the ones about us?"

"It certainly is the cusseddes luck. I'm amazed at it all. No matter which way we go we seem to get further up against it. Mounted on two farm horses, within a short distance of two towns, that we are anxiously awaited in, with the country alive with searching men it doesn't look to me as if we were going to have the times of our lives this trip!"

"How much cash do we get if we get away?"

"Taken all in all I figure that between us we will clean up about forty to forty-five thousand dollars in good money."

"That's going some! It's one of the best games we ever pulled over."

"From a money standpoint it is. The boys are all broke back home and when we stake them all I guess we ought to have a little left to keep the rainy days away."

"Then Cole Younger is out—"

"Y-e-s—the trouble with Cole is that he takes too many chances. He don't seem to get to the boodle the way we do. His raids of country banks don't seem to pan out as much as they might—but then he is holding-up smaller institutions where there ain't so much cash as we get to."

"How'd you like to git to New York or Chicago or St. Louis or Kansas City, and touch up a bank there?"

This fired Jesse's imagination.

"Like to?" he snapped. "It's the dream of my life! One good big bank like that would be enough for mine. I'd quit this business you bet in short order."

"Judging from the rewards being offered for us dead or alive it would pay the authorities to set a bank aside for you to loot up, eh?"

"Might be a good plan!"

Nothing more was said for a time. Then Jesse asked Frank if he knew any road that could be reached by going cross-country. His idea was that it might be a good plan for him to lead a dash over to this road for it was manifest on its face that it would be pretty dangerous to go to either Milton or North Milton; there were ghosts there, and real men besides, that it would be well to take a wide space to get away from.

"Y-e-s," thought Frank. "We might find most any kind of a road any way we go—but I would think in my mind that the easiest way out of it would be to rush across to the left. The going seems merely a succession of fields that have been tilled until they are as level as a floor."

The two men took down the bars of an old-fashioned five-barred rail fence that stood near and led the animals into the field. Then Frank put up the fence and they remounted and rode through a field with a second growth of clover in it. It was a sylvan scene. The bees were humming about; a flock of crows were cawing over head as they circled about and Jesse in spite of himself grinned in pleasure. There's nothing like the country in an early fall morning, he well knew.

Neither outlaw said a word. There was no use for conversation. Two men mounted on unstable plugs, surrounded by men bound to arrest and kill them, can not say much to each other; the time for conversation was about over.

The men at length entered a clump of chestnut trees and then skirted a long fringe of maples and soon came to the rail-fence that marked the other side of an extensive farm. They took down the rails, led their horses through, put back the rails again, so that no passer-by would see any change in the fence, and came out upon a high-road that led directly in the way they wished to take, which was merely the aimless direction away from Milton or North Milton.

"These roads are the queerest I ever saw," remarked Jesse.

"What makes you think that?"

"They seem to be gifted with the faculty of going in every direction!"

"They don't seem to be gifted with the faculty of going in a direction to allow us to make our sneaks," scoffed Frank.

"Right, my friend! But don't you forget one thing and that is that we are alive yet!"

"And that we are also uncaptured."

"And we aren't wounded seriously."

"That's so!"

"That we have good guns and plenty of ammunition."

"Not to say empty stomachs!"

"And horses that are wonders, nothing less, than real wonders!"

"Now with all that I'm going to take one more chance."

"What's that?"

"I'm going to eat!"

"Eat what, the horses?"

"N-o. I'm going to stick up the first farmhouse we come to and make any one there give me some real food. Food and lots of it is all I want. They can just keep their accursed gold. It's food for mine!"

"Come on then—I can't fight on an empty stomach. We'll hold up the first commissary department you ever heard of, and make whoever is in charge produce."

The outlaws hurried along to where they saw smoke coming out of a hollow. They got as near to the vapor as they dared and then they secreted their two plugs in a thicket and boldly walked out into the highway toward the house. A woman was frying some bacon in a big pan back on a rickety stove. She was a tall woman, gray haired and with faded blue eyes, her back bent with long years of toil. She wore a gown of that uncertain quality of goods called in Missouri home-spun.

By the side of the woman sat a faded out old man. He was at the end of the skein of life and his bouts with the world had given him so many unforeseen falls that about all the spirit was crushed out of him. The room around him bore hardly any fittings. There was a deal table, a few half useful chairs, and that was about all. Poverty was written all over the place.

"Home of a poor white," murmured Frank.

"And very poor at that," whispered Jesse.

"Never mind they may give us something to eat."

"If they've got enough for themselves we are lucky to get a crumb from that. I guess this ain't a place for gun-play."

As he spoke Jesse drove in the door softly with his great fist. The man looked up but not in surprise. That emotion had left him years ago.

"Lo, stranger," the faded man said. The woman adjusted her spectacles and smiled and continued frying bacon. The heavenly odor made Jesse and Frank eye it like famished wolves.

"Hello!" Jesse growled in answer to the man's salutation. "We are strangers as you see. We don't know any one hereabouts and we were trying to get to Milton. We are off the road in some way. I don't know how we got off it but we are, and we haven't had any breakfast and have been up since sun-up riding. We hitched our horses back a bit and traveled here on foot. They are done up and we don't know what to do."

"I kin fix ye," the old woman said. "They ain't much t' eat hyar but you alls is welcome t' what we hez. Thar's some bacon an' them chickuns out thar hez laid some eggs an' ef one o' ye boys will take yar hat an' go eout an' hunt some aigs ye can have meat an' eggs fer yer brk'ast."

"You go," said Frank in an undertone to Jesse, with a gleam of amusement in his eyes to think that an outlaw much sought for his deeds of blood, was reduced to hunting "aigs" in advance of a breakfast in a poor white home in Missouri.

"No you go," snapped Jesse who appreciated the joke.

"We'll both go," at length cried the formidable brothers and they laughingly started out and in half an hour returned with "aigs" enough to feed the family.

"Why whar ye git th'm?" queried the old woman, "me an' my ole man ain't so spry as we uster be an' we didn't think them hens never laid no more aigs like them."

Jesse explained that the hens had hidden their nests

in the top of the rickety little barn where there were a few whisks of hay still to be found. He explained that he had climbed a ladder and got the eggs while his friend had held the ladder.

"We ain't et much lately," the woman said. "Times is hard hyar. We ain't goin' t' stay much longer," the old man remarked with tears in his eyes. In answer to Jesse's adroit questions the old fellow sobbed out his troubles. His wife and he were all that was left of a large family. They had bought the ten acres about them five years before. They paid a few dollars down and the rest was held on a mortgage. They had lost their horse and could not buy another. The animal had foundered in a bog. Now they were about to lose all they had as the mortgage was about to be foreclosed.

"I'm pooty old ter git a fresh start," cried the old wreck.

Jesse looked at him and felt that he never had got a start any where in the race of life. He was hopelessly left at the post in the start. No hope now of even seeing the distance flag fall. He'd never last to the quarter mile pole.

"An jest think," garrulously rambled on the old relic. "Thet feller what's goin' ter git this teenty place hes a thousand acres hyar. Half a mile away he has got moren fifty thoroughbred running horses what's bein' bred fer the hoss market—say, he don't need my little po-ten acres, sho, but he'll git it! He will git it!"

Horses!

Thoroughbreds!

And near at hand!

Jesse's smiling eyes looked into the laughing ones of Frank. Here was a stroke of luck they had not reckoned upon. Fast horses in a field right near them? It would be a wonder of the ages if they didn't "get to" those horses in some way, Jesse said. But he made no remark to the old couple of his intentions. Instead he ate his breakfast of bacon and "aigs," corn-bread and meat, the yellow corn meal of the South-West and the razor-backed "hawg," and drank his alleged coffee with great gusto. No meal cooked under happier circumstances ever tasted so good to the two outlaws. They were nearly famished and hunger makes most any meal go good.

"Now farmer," remarked Jesse as he drew away from the table, "have you got a piece of rope?"

The wondering old man produced one about twenty-five feet long. He handed it to Jesse.

"Farmer," added the outlaw, "how much do you owe on this place?"

"Tree hund' dollars."

"That would get you out clear?"

"Shore. But I'll never see thet much!"

Jesse pulled a roll of bills out of his pocket. He counted out five hundred dollars. Frank laid five hundred on top of Jesse's pile and remarked that he'd "chip in" too. Jesse gave the money to the astonished farmer and told him that the cash was in small bills and could be used any time. It was pointed out by the outlaws that the couple had better account for the cash by claiming that some friend "N'oth" had sent them the money to clear off their place, and that what was over would buy another "mewl" and would help the old couple to a start once more.

Showered with blessings the two men rushed away. They refused to give their names and the old couple

never knew to whom they were indebted for the "fresh start" they had been given; which was better than to know that two outlaws of such infamous lives as the James boys had given them the cash!

In half an hour Jesse and Frank had "roped down" two likely young horses. Frank had hurried to the old farm cattle, taken their bridles, turned them loose and had then placed the bridles on the newly captured horses, and were gaily dancing down the road under the springy strides of the fresh young animals.

"This looks good to me," Jesse cried. "What did you get off the old woman whom you were buzzing, while I was talking to the old man, Frank?"

"I got a lot of news. It seems that she was full of information of the posses out after 'them James'es critters', and she told me that the only way she knew of thet 'them critters' could escape would be by riding down this road we are on for half a mile and then taking the one that turned to the left. She said that road was the highway leading to Northern Missouri, and was the only road about here that 'the critters' could escape by. She added that if the 'critters' didn't hit that road that they were caught without doubt."

"Well, I'll guarantee that they will 'hit that road' in ten minutes," laughed Jesse. "Frank, we are going to escape it seems to me—what's that?"

In the moment of his apparent victory the outlaw saw ahead of him, in a shady place under some maple trees that lined the road, a company of ten or fifteen men. A camp fire showed that they were bivouacing along the road and were getting a meal. Horses were tethered in an adjacent clover patch. The men were "off duty" apparently, for no sentries were set and, as luck would have it, the party was none other than that headed by Maxwell Hyde, which had returned from another fruitless run after the outlaws upon the information furnished by Tim Bennett. They had not expected that they would get any trace of the outlaws on their way back and they were getting something to eat in sullen despondency.

Jesse saw his only chance. He took it quickly.

He dug his heels into his horse's side and tore down the road at a wonderful burst of speed. Frank followed his example. In one grand rush the outlaws dashed by the camp of their pursuers and were over the brow of a hill beyond them, and away like frightened rabbits before any of the men could draw a weapon.

Maxwell Hyde was the first to see that the outlaws again had outwitted him.

"They have escaped, boys!" he cried calmly. "Don't try to follow them. Their horses are fresh, ours are weary—but while they have escaped us this time—just wait, 'it's a long lane that has no turning'!"

There was a sparkle in the eye of Maxwell Hyde that boded disaster to the two outlaws, who, at all events for the present, were safely out of reach of his revolver. But there is always a to-morrow!

THE END.

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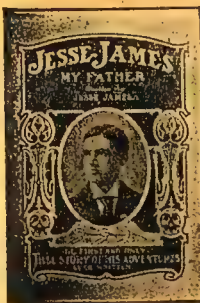
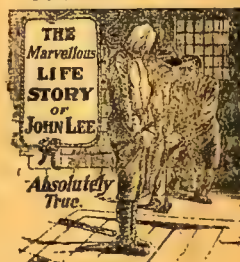
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77. The Red Detective; A Great Tale of Mystery.
78. The Weird Warnings of Fate; or Ebeon's Strange Case.
79. The Treasure of the Rockies; A Tale of Strange Adventures.
80. Bonanza Bardie's Winning Strike; being the sequel to "The Treasure of the Rockies."
81. Long Shadow, the Detective; A Tale of Indian Strategy.
82. The Magic Disguise Detective; The Weird Adventures of a "Transform."
83. A Young Detective's Great Shadow; A Narrative of Extraordinary Detective Devices.
84. Stealthy Brock, the Detective; or Trailed to their Doom.
85. Old Sleuth to the Rescue; A Startling Narrative of Hidden Treasure.
86. Old Sleuth, the Avenger; being the sequel to "Old Sleuth to the Rescue."
87. The Great Jewel Mystery; or The Right Man in the Case.
88. Jackson Cooper, the Wizard Detective; A Narrative of Wonderful Detective Skill.
89. Foiling the Conspirators; or Daring Tom Carey to the Rescue.
90. The Banker's Crime; or The Weird Adventures of "Phenomenal Joe."
91. Gasparoni, the Italian Detective; A Strange Weird Tale of City Life.
92. The Vengeance of Fate; being the sequel to "Gasparoni, the Italian Detective."
93. The Secret-Special Detective; or "Old Transform" on the Trail.
94. The Shadow of a Crime; or the "Iron Duke's" Strange Case.
95. The Secret of the Kidnapped Heir; A Strange Detective Narrative.
96. Foiled by a Female Detective; being the sequel to "The Kidnapped Heir."
97. "Old Ironsides" in New York; or The Daughter of the G. A. R.
98. The Irish Detective; or Fergus Connor's Greatest Case.
99. The Shadow Detective; or The Mysteries of a Night.
100. Detective Thrash, the Man-Trapper; A Story of Extraordinary Detective Devices.
101. "Old Ironsides" at His Best; A Marvelous Detective Narrative.
102. Trailed by an Assassin; A Tale of Italian Vengeance.
103. The Lust of Hate; being the sequel to "Trailed by an Assassin."
104. A Golden Curse; or The Harvest of Sin.
105. The Hotel Tragedy; or Manfred's Greatest Detective Adventure.
106. The Mystery of Room 207; being the sequel to The Hotel Tragedy.
107. Gardemore, the Detective; or the King of the "Shadows."
108. The Fatal Chair; being the sequel to Gardemore, the Detective.
109. The Mask of Mystery; or The Graveyard Murder.
110. The Twisted Trail; being the sequel to the Mask of Mystery.
111. Booth Bell; or The Prince of Detectives Among the Indians.
112. The Beautiful Captive; being the continuation of Booth Bell.
113. Booth Bell's Twisted Trail; being the sequel to The Beautiful Captive.
114. The Wall Street Detective; or Harry Weir, the Lightning Trailer.
115. The Banker's Secret; being the sequel to The Wall Street Detective.
116. The Wizard's Trail; or The Mystery of a Lost Casket.
117. The House of Mystery; being the sequel to The Wizard's Trail.
118. Old Sleuth in New York; or Trailing a Great Criminal.
119. Manfred, the Ventriloquist Detective; or Wonderful Midnight "Shadows" in New York.
120. Wild Mudge; or The Female Government Detective.
121. Old Electricity in New York; or Wayne Winthrop's Trail of a "Dead Secret."
122. Gamal the Hunchback; or The Adventures of a Ventriloquist.
123. Seth Bond, Detective; or the Mystery of an Old Mansion.
124. Galloway, the Detective; or Running the Crooks to Earth.
125. Old Sleuth's Quest; or A Fair Daughter's Fate.
126. Presto Quick; or The Weird Magician Detective.
127. Old Ironsides Long Trail; or The Giant Detective Out West.
128. Forging the Links; being the sequel to Old Ironsides Long Trail.
129. Queen Myra; or A Woman's Great Game of Hide and Seek.
130. The Duke of New York; or The Adventures of a Billionaire.
131. Prowler Tom, the Detective; or The Floating Beauty Mystery.
132. Man Against Man; being the sequel to Prowler Tom.
133. Old Sleuth's Silent Witness; or The Dead Hand at the Morgue.
134. The League of Four; or The Trail of the Man Tracker.
135. The House of Fear; or The Young Duke's Strange Quest.

TO BE PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY.

- Feb. 3—136. Foiled by Fate; being the sequel to The House of Fear.
Feb. 10—137. A Dash for Millions; or Old Ironsides Trail of Mystery.
Feb. 17—138. The Trail of Three; or The Motor Pirates' Last Stand.
Feb. 24—139. A Dead Man's Hand; or Caught by his Own Victim.

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THE ARTHUR WESTBROOK COMPANY, CLEVELAND, OHIO, U. S. A.

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PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY

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No. 3. THE BLACK DEATHor The Curse of the Navajo Witch
No. 4. THE SQUAW MAN'S REVENGEor Kidnapped by the Piutes
No. 5. TRAPPED BY THE CREESor Tricked by a Renegade Scout
No. 6. BETRAYED BY A MOCCASINor The Round-Up of the Indian Smugglers
No. 7. FLYING CLOUD'S LAST STANDor The Battle of Dead Man's Canyon
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No. 15. THE TREASURES OF MacKENZIE ISLES.....or The Outlaw's Drag-Net
No. 16. HELD UP AT SNAKE BASIN.....or The Renegade's Death-Vote
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- May 25—No. 26. THE HERMIT BANDIT'S REVENGE.....or The League of the Fur-Stealers
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June 22—No. 30. TORNADO BESS THE KIDNAPPER.....or The Outlaws of Rabbit Island
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